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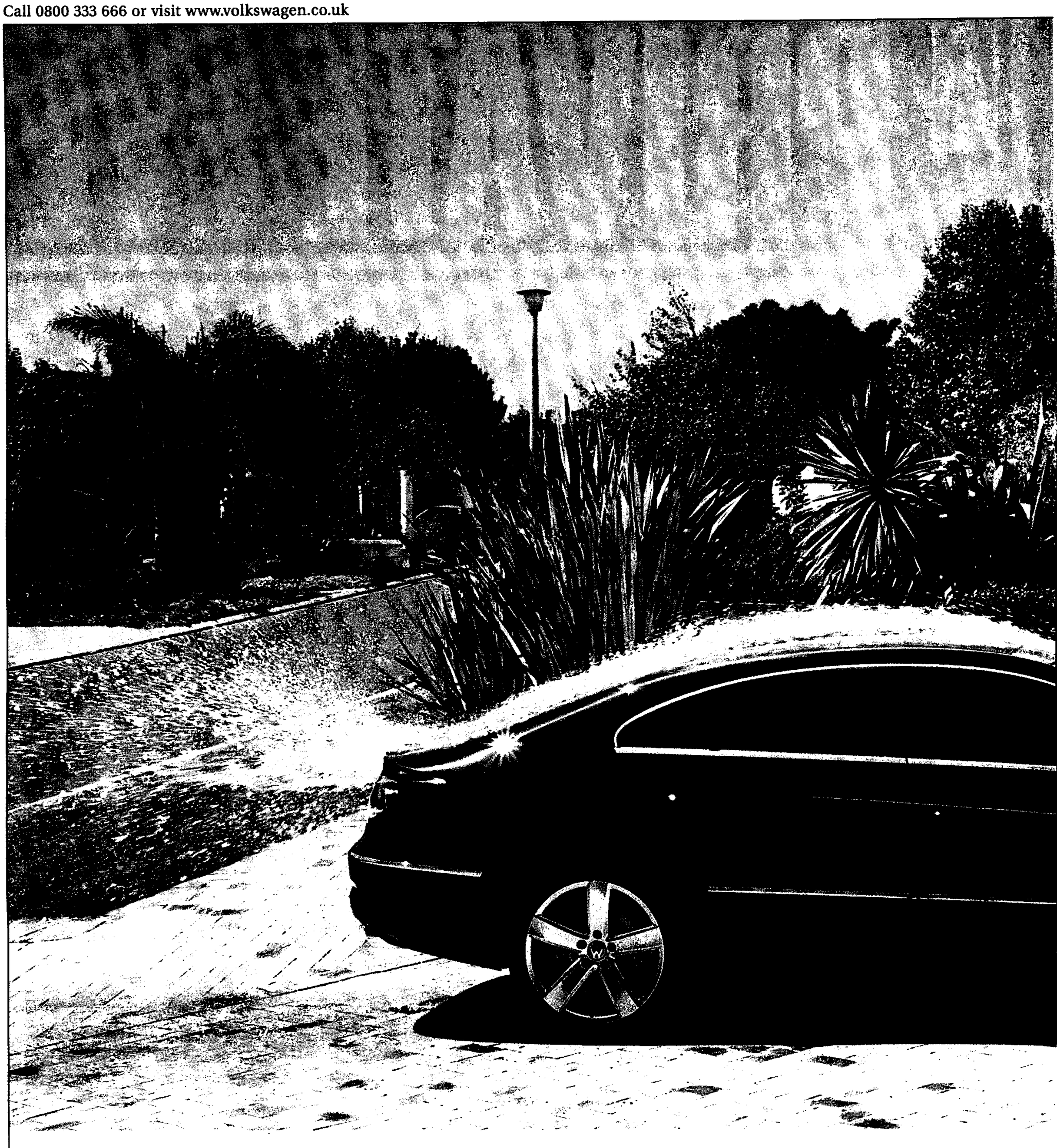

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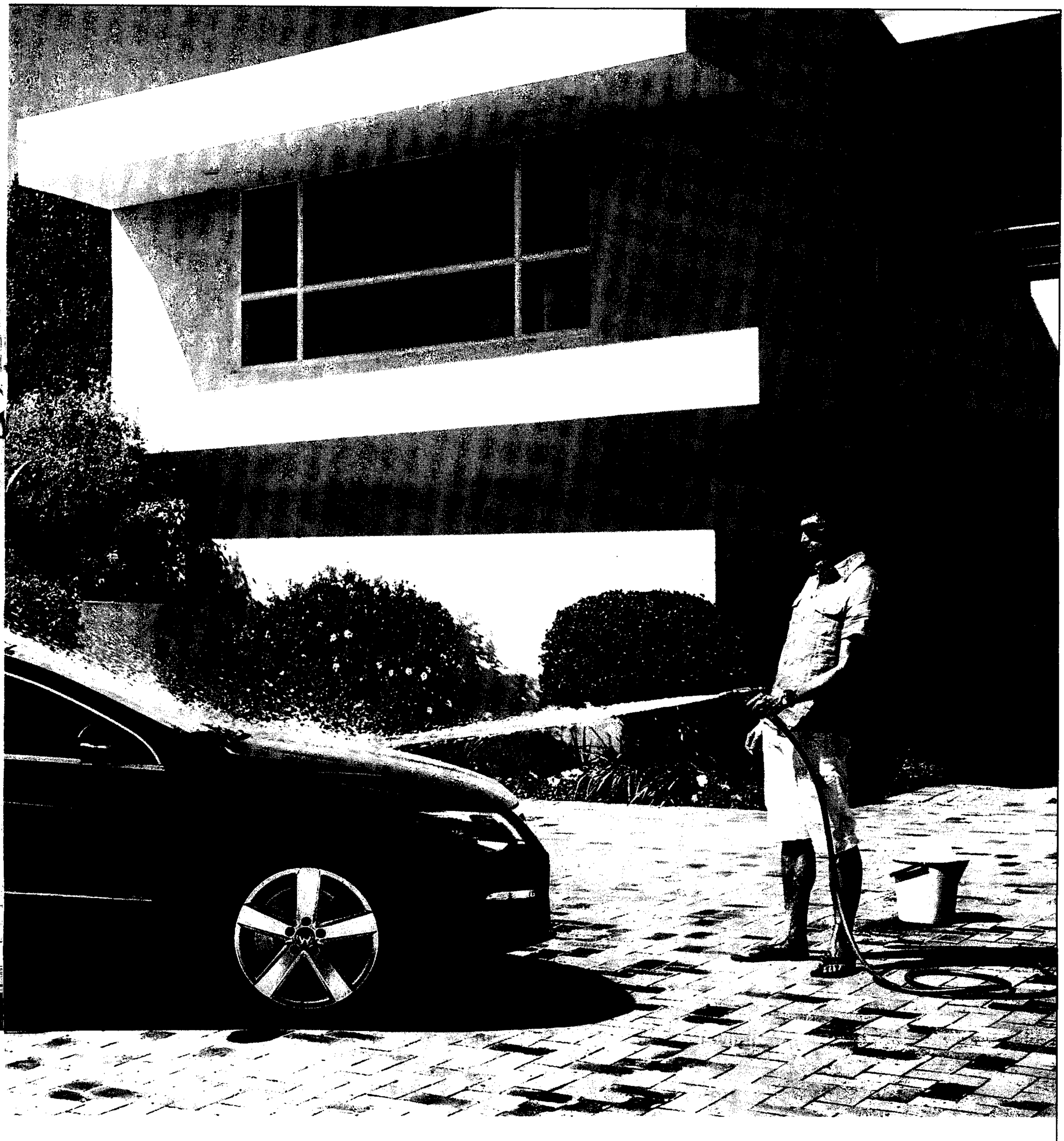

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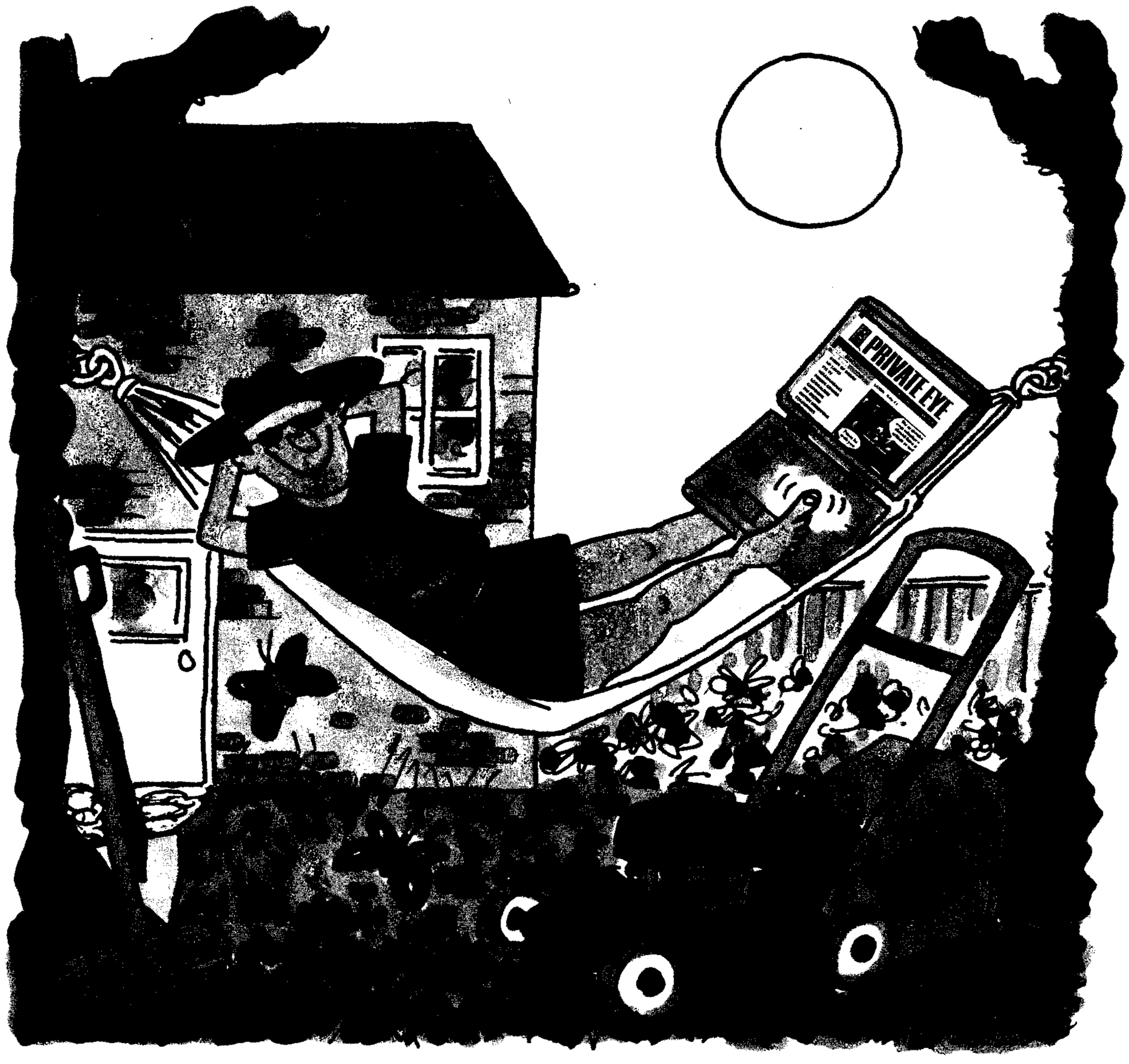

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Gnome

I AM deeply disturbed to read the criticism of drug giant Gnomo-Glaxo by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE).

The Nice Chairman has accused my company of seeking to make unseemly profits from the sale of our pharmaceutical products.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Gnomo-Glaxo have been unstinting in our efforts to improve the health of the nation. Our aim has always been to invest in research leading to new and better drugs.

In this way we hope to improve and enhance the well-being of our senior executives, enabling them to lead a richer life for the benefit of the community as a whole, and particularly myself.

E. Strobes
pp. Lord Gnome
Gnomo-Glaxo
Milton Keynes
Staffs.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

THE BOURN COMPLICITY

How Britain's public spending watchdog lost its teeth while its master was out to lunch

Private Eye Special Report on the legacy of Sir John Bourn

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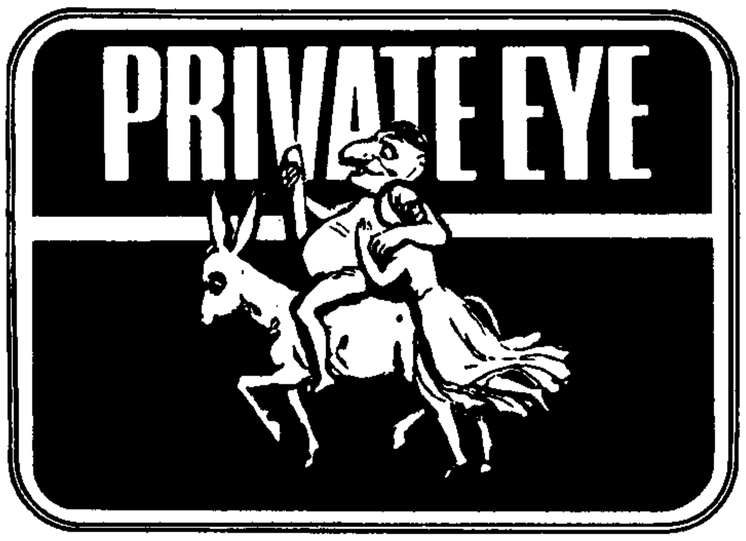

A talent for meddling

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WHILE foreign secretary David Miliband has been busy calling for a ceasefire between Russia and Georgia, Britain has also been busy – selling more weapons to both countries.

According to Foreign Office licences, 2007 was a record year for arms exports to both Georgia and Russia. The UK sold Georgia £5.4m of military exports, including very useful-sounding "military firing sets". This was an eightfold increase since 2005, when British military exports to Georgia stood only at £250,000. Meanwhile the Georgian army underwent a $63m American "train and equip" programme, designed to build up Georgia's military so it could fight in Iraq and be ready to join Nato – and, as it turns out, prepare an assault on South Ossetia.

In response, Putin's forces appear to have broken the Georgian army, presumably rendering the arms exports useless. Fortunately Britain has been even-handed in its approach: although Russia needs little help running one of the world's biggest armies, the Foreign Office is keen to do its bit by granting licences. In 2007 Russia got £55m of exports, including armoured personnel carriers and parts for combat aircraft. These sales have also risen dramatically: in 2004 Britain sold Russia a mere £5m of military kit. The eight-to-tenfold increase of British arms sales to both sides of the Caucuses seems to have precisely presaged the war.

ONE of the most eye-catching performances in Beijing last week was the new all-comers' record for kowtowing set by BBC director-general Mark Thompson.

"It's amazing how far and how quickly Beijing is changing, and clearly China is changing," he babbled to the official New China News Agency. "There is no question China has been more open to foreign media than at any point in history." He declared that the BBC and indeed all the international media were impressed and delighted by the "ease" with which they can report in China.

This caused some astonishment in the offices of *Panorama* and *Newsnight*, which had just put the new openness to the test by sending their respective hacks John Sweeney and Rupert Wingfield-Hayes to China – both of whom were followed around by goon squads wherever they went.

Soon after Thompson's tribute to the "ease" with which hacks can now cover stories, China correspondent John Wray was beaten and detained by Beijing police for reporting a protest outside the Olympic stadium. But he works for ITN rather than the BBC, so that's all right then.

HIGH excitement in the tabloids last week at comments by Julian Critchley, formerly head of the Cabinet Office's Anti-Drug Co-ordination Unit, about the ineffectiveness of government policy on drugs.

The *Mail* quoted him as saying: "It's much easier to come out with soundbites about being tough on drugs and continuing to crack down on drug dealers when in actual fact we know that doesn't work."

But Critchley said rather more than that. For ministers, he complained, "what worked mattered considerably less than what would play well in the right-wing press. The tragedy of our drugs policy is that it is dictated by tabloid irrationality". He added: "I find that when presented with the facts, the students I teach are quite capable of considering issues such as this, and reaching rational conclusions even if they started with a blind *Daily Mail*-esque approach. I find it a shame that no mainstream political party accords the electorate the same respect."

Oddly enough, the *Mail* deemed these remarks not worth reporting.

WHAT next for Callum McCarthy, who chaired the Financial Services Authority (FSA) while it systematically failed to regulate Northern Rock, allowing the bank to borrow too much until it nearly went bust?

McCarthy is stepping down from the financial regulator and chancellor Alistair Darling has found the perfect new job for him: as a non-executive director of the Treasury itself.

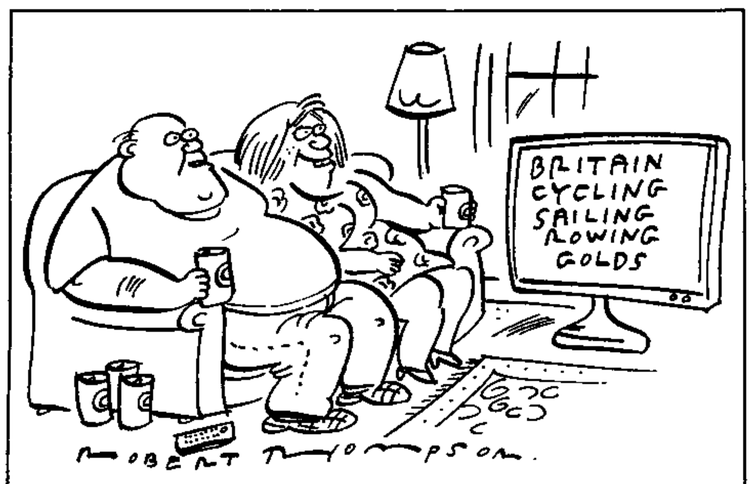
Having been in charge of regulation when Northern Rock imploded, he can now be first on the scene when the entire economy collapses.

AT LEAST one property firm is weathering the current storm, thanks to the British taxpayer.

Mapeley, the Guernsey-based group that the *Eye* revealed had bought HM Revenue and Customs' buildings seven years ago through a Bermudan company, last week reported "strong operational performance on [its] outsourcing contracts" in the first half of 2008. The tens of millions in profits sheltered a good part of the paper fall in value of its portfolio and the firm could still record a "good cash position".

Strange then that back in 2002 when parliament was examining the Mapeley deal, known as STEPS (strategic transfer of estate to the private sector), chief executive Jamie Hopkins assured MPs that "the STEPS contract economics are marginal for Mapeley on an operating basis. Mapeley shareholder returns therefore rely upon capital gains on the valuable properties towards the end of the contract term [in 2021]".

The unlikely prospect of a private equity-owned offshore property company waiting 20 years for its profits wasn't queried at the time. And, sure enough, Mapeley was soon negotiating increased fees from HMRC – leading to the taxpayer-funded protection from the property crash that it now enjoys. Hopkins' promise was always hollow at best, and perhaps a straightforward porkie pie.



"I wonder why we're so good at the sitting down events?"

NEWS

NO COMPANY has a greater interest in the government's line on Zimbabwe – or greater reason to appreciate official support for pursuing "business as usual", however appalling Mugabe's oppression – than Rio Tinto, owner of huge mining operations in the country.

And who should feature most prominently on a list of hospitality enjoyed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's top mandarin, obtained by the *Eye* under freedom of information laws? Er, Rio Tinto.

The FCO's commitment to freedom of information is such that it would only provide details of the junkets of one official for one year (much else would be too expensive as, by its own admission, it doesn't keep proper records of these things). But in spring 2006, just as western multinationals were getting worried how their governments would react to Mugabe's escalating violence, Rio Tinto managed to schmooze the then FCO permanent secretary Sir (now Lord) Michael Jay not once, but twice: first with dinner at an unspecified location, then with a night at the opera.

The diamond diggers weren't the only ones buttering up Sir Michael. Oil giant BP, desperate for FCO help over its troubled Russian venture, also took him out twice – to dinner and a "special exhibition" (of what, nobody knows) – and duly benefited from significant government support.

HE MAY have captured Basra in 2003, but can Lt Gen Robin Brims win the battle for minds (if not hearts) as rector at one of Kurdistan's new universities?

Seven academics at the English language-based University of Kurdistan Hawler (UKH), in Erbil, have already resigned in protest at the appointment of Lt Gen Brims, who replaces respected political scholar Dr Abbas Vali in the top job just two years after the university opened. The job of rector at UKH is not an honorary position but a hands-on management role.

Dr Vali, who is Kurdish, used to work at the University of Wales in Swansea and his international reputation helped UKH recruit many of its English-speaking academics, but he was soon at the centre of a row after 60 percent of students failed their foundation year exams in 2007. He was removed from his post earlier this year by the Kurdish regional government.

Lt Gen Brims led the UK's 1st Armoured Division into Basra in 2003, winning the Distinguished Service Order medal for his leadership in the battle. He was appointed to the new job by Kurdish PM Nechirvan Barzani, despite never having attended university. Barzani also joins Brims on the university's new five-person governing body, along with another government representative.

In a speech to academics before their summer break, Brims said: "I was a soldier in the British Army for 38 years and am now retired. This does not mean I wish to turn UKH into a military academy, because that would fail to meet the Prime Minister's vision."

So much for academic independence from state interference.

Street Of Shame

WRIST-SLITTINGLY depressing as the idea of anyone actively trying to become "the new Piers Morgan" might be, former *Heat* editor Mark Frith seems determined to do just that: his book *The Celeb Diaries: The Sensational Inside Story Of The Celebrity Decade* shares a publisher (Ebury Press), a serialiser (the *Daily Mail)* and very nearly a title with the original Moron's 2005 opus *The Insider: The Private Diaries of A Scandalous Decade.*

It would seem he also has a similarly tenuous grasp of the true sequence of events, if the entry for 9 December 1999 as rendered in Saturday's *Mail* is anything to go by.

"Yesterday," Frith confides, "I was told that I am being made editor of *Heat* – the biggest (and most public) flop in the history of British magazines. When we launched, as a smart, serious, wordy entertainment magazine, aimed mostly at men, we put out 300,000 copies and sold about 70,000. Now we're selling only half of that. Our publishers have decided to relaunch us as a celebrity magazine, aimed mostly at women. They want sales over 100,000 every week by the end of June or they'll close us."

So who was the inept launch editor responsible for this unwise project, appointed by publisher Emap way back in January 1998 when it was still going under the codename "Project J", who gave a number of bullish interviews prior to its appearance on the news-stands in February 1999 boasting of how its unique appeal both men and women – indeed, any "people who like films, music and TV" would make it a sure-fire winner? One, er, Mark Frith.

***GUARDIAN* editor Alan Rusbridger has pitted the two main rivals to succeed him against each other by promoting Kath Viner and Ian Katz to the posts of joint deputy editor. The fact Viner and Katz keep doing the same jobs as each other – both have edited G2 and now she is taking over from him as editor of the Saturday paper – only increases the rivalry.**

It was Viner who masterminded a virulent campaign in G2 against Boris Johnson in the final days of the mayoral election, accusing the blond Tory bombshell of being a "bigoted, lying, Old Etonian buffoon". This went down very well with leftie hardliners inside Guardian HQ with the notable exception of Ian Katz – Boris's next-door neighbour.

Happily for Katz, Boris still became mayor and now he has settled a score. In one of his last acts as editor of the Saturday *Guardian*, he commissioned a celebratory interview this month marking Johnson's 100 days in office. Headlined "Capital charmer", it described the new mayor's "exuberant delight" and "daredevil panache". And there was no mention of Eton or buffoonery.

JUST FANCY THAT!

Judge's spelling anger

An Old Bailey judge labelled a prosecution worker an "illiterate idiot" after spotting the word "grievous" spelt wrongly four times in court papers. Judge David Paget said: "To have an indictment drawn up by some illiterate idiot is just not good enough."

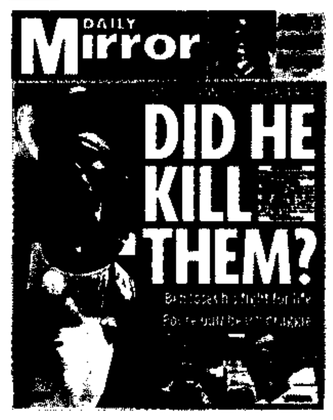
The Times, 12.8.08, p.16

Liverpool Crown Court
James O'Connor and Gavin Alker, both 19, charged with grevious bodily harm.

The Times, 12.8.08, p.9

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS

Q



A "The man suspected of murdering newlyweds Catherine and Ben Mullany was last night released from custody in Antigua – *Mirror*, 8 August, p. 8

Q

A "Girl on CCTV isn't Maddie" – *Sun*, 13 August, p. 15

NEVER mind war in the Caucasus: the first three pages of the *Sunday Times* News Review on 10 August were devoted to the rather more important topic of Belinda Harley's adorable dog.

Harley, a posh PR woman who once worked for Prince Charles, met Goofy while staying in Paxos. It was love at first sight: "My funny little timeshare dog and I became a familiar feature, walking miles along cliffs, stopping in villages so that he could cheek the basking cats. Everywhere we went, old ladies in black clucked and fed him, children on bicycles called his name. An old fisherman on the quay observed, stroking Goofy's ears: 'Einai filos me ollous' – 'He is friend with everybody'." And so on, for 3,300 excruciating words.

While *Sunday Times* readers puzzled over what on earth this had to do with "news", some may also have had a sense of *déjà vu*.

"Goofy and I became a familiar feature," Belinda Harley wrote seven years ago, "walking miles across clifftops, stopping in villages to check the basking cats. Everywhere we went, old ladies in black clucked and fed him, children on bicycles called his name. An old fisherman on the quay, stroking Goofy's ears, said: 'Einai filos me ollous' – 'He is friend with everybody'." And so on, for 3,300 excruciating words, in a feature published by the *Daily Telegraph* on 27 January 2001 – almost all of which she has now recycled verbatim in the *Sunday Times*. Attagirl!

THE transformation of the *Daily Telegraph* into the *Maily Telegraph* continues, with an edict from editor Will "Thirsty" Lewis warning sub-editors on the business pages not to confuse the "intelligent general reader".

It was prompted by the previous day's headline on the business supplement, "IMF warns that UK is on the brink of recession" – which, according to Lewis, should have read "UK is on the brink of recession, warn experts". Apparently the "intelligent general reader" that the *Telegraph* now aims for isn't quite intelligent enough to know what the IMF is, nor the significance of its forecast (as opposed to, say, a warning from "experts" at the Federation of Off-Licences) – or, indeed, to have an attention span long enough to read the first paragraph for illumination before turning back to the main paper for the latest, more digestible news of Britney, Amy and Peaches.

ALTHOUGH no one reads the Sunday *People*, and few even know it exists, the paper still maintains a graduate-trainee scheme. Perhaps not for much longer, however, after the rank ingratitude displayed by young Tom Latchem.

Days before completing his three years of expensive training and taking up a staff job, Latchem revealed to news editor Lee Harpin that he'd had an offer from the *People*'s arch-rival, the *News of the Screws*. "Fuck off, then," Harpin replied, "you fat, Bournemouth-supporting, no-mates cunt." Latchem duly did.

SUMMER QUIZ

CAN you guess which tabloid funsheet:

a) recently purchased the Google keywords "Madeleine McCann, among thousands of others, so that curious web-browsers would be directed to their coverage as the highlighted "Sponsored Link" when searching for information on the missing child?

b) ran these photographs in a special online Olympic photo gallery purporting to demonstrate the "dark, symbolic significance" of the Georgian/Russian beach volleyball match?

c) has launched a new section on its website called "Celebrity Sightings: Our regularly-updated review of celebrity photos and paparazzi snaps"?

Answers: **a)** *The Guardian* **b)** *The Guardian* **c)** *The Daily Telegraph*

BURIAL – the dubstep producer who is currently favourite to win the Mercury music prize for his album Untrue – is a determinedly anonymous South Londoner who has only ever given one interview, to music journalist Dan Hancox. It appeared in the *Guardian* in October 2007 beneath the headline quote: "only five people know I make tunes."

Fans were therefore surprised to find Gordon Smart, editor of the *Sun*'s Bizarre showbiz column, claiming on 4 August, that the mysterious musician had "conducted a Bizarre phone interview where he confessed: 'Only five people know I make tunes'."

This, Smart insisted when Hancox contacted him to ask why he was claiming credit for his ten-month-old face-to-face interview, was a very simple mistake. He wasn't implying that anyone from Bizarre had conducted the interview, he was simply claiming it was an "*adj.* odd or unusual, esp. in an interesting or amusing way" chat. "Bizarre was lower case when I left the office," Smart emailed. "A bad mistake which I have slapped the wrists of a sub for. No ill-intentions I can assure you."

"IMAGINE if you'd dropped a clanger at work. An expensive one, say in the region of £100,000. How long do you think you'd be in your job? 30 seconds? 30 minutes? The very maximum 30 hours." Thus Kelvin MacKenzie in the *Sun*, attacking RBS chief executive Fred Goodwin for refusing to resign after presiding over a bumper year of debts at the bank.

Still, £100,000 is peanuts compared with the million pounds the *Sun* paid out to Elton John for falsely accusing him of having sex with under-age rent boys, and the huge losses in sales revenue after it wrongly accused Liverpool fans of pickpocketing and urinating over the dead at the Hillsborough disaster. These clangers were dropped in 1987 and 1989 yet the editor responsible, a chap named MacKenzie, somehow clung to his job until 1994.

Births

ARCHER.—On 26th July 2008, to KATY (née Jones) and EDWARD, a daughter, Florentina Emilie, a sister for Georgina, Christopher, Charlie, Clementina, Gabriella, Montgomery, Cordelia, Angelina, Seraphina, Decima and Delphine.

Daily Telegraph

HACKWATCH

Foot-balls

CRISTIANO RONALDO is a footballer; quite a good one. At some point this summer it appears he considered leaving Manchester United for Real Madrid, "appears" being the operative word because no one, including the player himself, was ever sure if he had really made up his mind to leave. And, er, that's it – more than enough to provide three months of page-filling scoops for footie hacks who would otherwise be twiddling their thumbs until the new season starts...

4 May: "Real Madrid have conceded defeat in the battle to prise Cristiano Ronaldo away from Manchester United," reports the *Mirror*. "While Ronaldo harbours an ambition to play in La Liga, he is only 12 months into a five-year contract and speculation of interest from Real and Barcelona has failed to unsettle him." Alas! Within a few weeks, the *Mirror* has lost its nerve: "Cristiano Ronaldo edged closer to the Old Trafford exit last night..." How does the paper know this? Thanks to that trusty source, the anonymous "close friend": "Ronaldo has made his mind up now and feels it is just time to wait before he announces what he will do – which is to go to Madrid."

3 June. "The likelihood of Cristiano Ronaldo leaving Manchester United receded further yesterday with Real Madrid president Ramon Calderon appearing to end their interest," the *Daily Telegraph* claims. Two days later it changes its mind – and introduces a new plot-twist: "Manchester United could be forced to repel the advances of Spain's two biggest clubs in the battle to hold on to Cristiano Ronaldo, with Barcelona yesterday preparing to rival Real Madrid in the race to sign the Portuguese forward."

9 June: A romantic interlude. The *Sun*'s Bizarre columnist Gordon Smart reveals that Cristiano Ronaldo "is rumoured to be getting hitched to Nereida Gallardo". A couple of weeks later, the *Star* adds that Ronaldo "has hired a £10m luxury yacht so the sweethearts can sail off and escape frenzied speculation over his Old Trafford future. Their loved-up trip will also squash rumours he had dumped the racy model after she failed to show up at Euro 2008." Needless to say, the story hits the buffers soon afterwards as the couple split. Meanwhile, back on the sport pages, the *Sun* has a "sensational" picture of "a senior Real Madrid official" meeting Ronaldo. True, it was a chance encounter 22 weeks earlier in Rome with, er, the Real fitness coach but there is only one possible conclusion. "Madrid president Ramon Calderon only yesterday insisted there is NO evidence his club have tried to lure winger Ronaldo from United. But that looks inconceivable thanks to our dramatic picture, which we will give to United as they urge Fifa to take action against Real."

3 August: "Cristiano Ronaldo will demand to be allowed to move to Real Madrid when he returns to Old Trafford on Tuesday after the Spanish champions publicly reiterated their desire to sign the Portuguese winger," Duncan White declares unequivocally in the *Sunday Telegraph*. "After weeks of speculation, Ronaldo will attempt to force Manchester United's hand by meeting Sir Alex Ferguson, the manager, and David Gill, the chief executive, to ask to be allowed to move to the Bernabeu."

5 August: The *Mirror* is equally adamant that the forward will be Madrid-bound. "Ronaldo has refused to come back and face Sir Alex Ferguson – in a last desperate bid to force Manchester United to sell him to Real Madrid," reports Martin Lipton. "Sources close to the Portugal star claimed: 'Cristiano is not going back today, tomorrow, or any time soon. Everyone knows what he wants'."

7 August: Everyone does indeed know what Ronaldo wants because he releases a public statement saying he will play for... Manchester United. If United are happy, imagine how ecstatic the Sunday Telegraph's Duncan White must be. Four days earlier, he published a story that was bollocks from beginning to end. Now he's been promoted to football correspondent. And they say the beautiful game is full of overpaid mediocrities...

"JENNIFER ANISTON: How the *Friends* star has found love at last", shrieked the front page of the *Daily Express* on 31 July, heralding one of those unmistakable news-free puff-pieces that generally mean proprietor Richard Desmond is angling for either an exclusive deal with *OK!* or a guest appearance with his pretendy rock band, the RD Crusaders.

"Jennifer, 39, and her beau of three months John Mayer, 30, have been inseparable all summer," simpered showbiz editor Elisa Roche inside. "The loved-up pair have even started to dress alike... Their closeness has earned them the nickname 'Maniston'."

One week later, Roche had all the more reason to be certain. "TV star Jennifer Aniston will marry her musician boyfriend John Mayer later this year, say friends. They have told *OK! USA* that the actress has decided John is the man with whom she wants to spend the rest of her life."

And lo, it came to pass – less than a week later, the couple broke up.

"DON'T blind-drunk women today bear any responsibility for what happens to them?" asked an anguished Roger Graef in the *Daily Mail* in the wake of news that rape victims who had been drinking had had their compensation payouts cut.

"As ladette culture has spread across UK towns and cities and abroad, more and more women have gone out on the town – drinking to excess and behaving ever more raucously, sending blunt signals to young men also on the prowl. Subtle it's not."

It sure ain't. On the directly adjacent page, having pointed out that her "other half" was away in Beijing, columnist Allison Pearson was flaunting her availability. "I find I have a sliding scale of alcohol-induced attraction," she slurred. "One glass of wine – Simon Cowell. Two glasses – Boris Johnson. One bottle of wine – Sven Goran Eriksson... 1 Bottle of wine, one Bacardi and Coke – Earl Spencer. (Yes, I am seeking professional help). 1 bottle of wine, two Bacardis and a large brandy – David Miliband. So who would be in yours?"

"THESE days half the writers need six quotes before they can write a piece," Geoffrey Boycott tells the latest edition of the *Wisden Cricketer*. "When you've got a byline, it should be your words."

A fair point... and one with which Simon Briggs, the *Telegraph* hack charged with turning the Yorkshireman's rambling broadsides into a regular, coherent column, would no doubt agree.

"Uggh, back to bunking off school next week"

CUSTOMERS of EDF energy no longer have to listen to its chief operating officer, Derek Lickorish, justifying the latest massive price hike. Because the rises have stopped? Er, no. Lickorish has changed horse.

Environment and energy ministers Phil Woolas and Malcolm Wicks have appointed him chairman of their new fuel poverty advisory group. And as Woolas said, Lickorish will be doing "everything possible to help people struggling to pay their fuel bills". Of course he will; for who better to sort out the pain of rising electricity and gas price than the man who spent so many years helping to impose them?

Wicks added that Lickorish has a "valuable insight into how vulnerable people can take advantage of the different offers in the market". Well, he can certainly draw on his experience as chief operating officer at London Electricity in 2002, when the firm was fined £2m for tricking customers into switching suppliers through devious doorstep sales.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Schools should be the engines of social mobility – where talent and hard work, not background, determine success. Yet this government has not only failed to narrow the gap between richest and poorest, it has allowed it to widen."

– Introduction to "A Failed Generation", report issued by the Conservative party, 14 of whose frontbench were educated at Eton

A STINGER of a letter has been sent to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea by the chairman of the Barkston Gardens Residents Association, protesting vehemently at the plan for a new newspaper kiosk outside Earl's Court tube station, which is "aesthetically out of proportion".

His main objection, however, is financial, as he's heard that almost £50,000 may be spent on the project. "I hope it does not sound too pompous to say that as a former chief secretary to the Treasury I have some experience of local authority profligacy. A £50,000 kiosk takes us back into the stratosphere of Derek Hatton's Liverpool or Ted Knight's Lambeth."

A scary stratosphere indeed: Ted Knight was banned from office, Derek Hatton was expelled from his party. Could any politician be more notorious? Step forward former jailbird Jonathan Aitken, chairman of the Barkston Garden Residents' Association!

GREAT news! Instead of spending money on buying in professional advice on employment law, jobs minister Pat McFadden announced last week, companies can now use a set of free, easy crib sheets.

His department is offering businesses of all sizes advice on how to cut the "human resources" and payroll costs of employing people.

Sadly the advice to stop buying in expensive HR comes too late for many public sector bodies. Buying in staff admin services from Capita proved disastrous for the Leicester Hospitals NHS Trust, which ended up paying bank charges for staff after their payroll was botched month after month last year (*Eyes passim*). Also stuck with Capita is the BBC, which can't afford to break its £100m outsourced HR deal even though the firm lost personal details of staff (*Eye* 1212).

Meanwhile in Northern Ireland, the cost of outsourcing all civil service HR to Fujitsu has spiralled from the planned £328m to £465m.

VLAD TIDINGS OF CAMERON & JOY

WILLIAM HAGUE, the shadow foreign secretary, did not follow Neville Chamberlain's example and dismiss the fighting in Georgia as a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing – but he came very close.

His response to Vladimir Putin's attempt to rebuild the Tsarist empire was to express the hope that Russia and Georgia would "commit themselves to talks and cease fighting immediately". And, er, that was it.

So many rank and file Conservative members bombarded party websites with protests at Hague's remarks ("Pointless. So, so, so weak") that David Cameron was obliged to step in. He ended up sounding far more in tune with European opinion than the plodding Gordon Brown when he declared: "Whatever the criticisms that can be made of some of Georgia's actions, Russia has used massive force against an independent, sovereign democracy. That is completely unacceptable and illegal – and the global community must stand strong and united in its condemnation." He promptly flew to Tbilisi and pressed the flesh.

The global community may unite against Putin, but will Cameron's fellow Tory politicians? Bizarrely for anyone old enough to remember Margaret Thatcher's confrontations with the Soviet Union, Putin now has no truer friend in Europe than the British Conservative party. Russian oil wealth offers the tantalising chance of directorships for friendly politicians; but the main motive that draws Tories into Putin's embrace isn't money but their hatred of the European Union.

The party of the thoroughly modern David Cameron ought to be able to work with those other successful centre-right politicians Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel. But because Sarkozy and Merkel support greater EU integration, the Tories will have nothing to do with them. They ally instead with assorted deadbeats and nutcases from fringe nationalist parties in the European parliament. When they move beyond the EU, they cut deals with Putin's far more formidable and far more dangerous United Russia Party and try to advance the careers of its apparatchiks.

Thus it was that in January Conservative MPs lobbied to make a former KGB man president of the Council of Europe's parliamentary assembly. David Wilshire, the MP for Spelthorne and leader of the Tory group on the council, didn't care two hoots if Mikhail Margelov was an instructor at the KGB academy during the 1980s and was a loyal supporter of Putin. Margelov didn't believe in a federal Europe, and that was what mattered. The small countries which border Russia were furious. The Council of Europe may be a talking shop, but they could see the Kremlin using its presidency to denounce Putin's opponents in Europe.

The stitch-up nearly came off. But after the rigged Russian elections in December, when the rivals of Putin's chosen successor were effectively banned from appearing on television, the other parties at the Council of Europe revolted and insisted Margelov couldn't be president.

Wounded but undeterred, the Tories secured concessions in return for their candidate stepping aside. Putin would be invited to address the council, and a proposed debate on abuses in the Russian elections would be shelved. As a further favour for Moscow, the Conservatives then tried to stop the council inviting President Saakashvili of Georgia to speak in Strasbourg, and were only just defeated.

The Russian newspaper *Kommersant* said that Wilshire had made clear which side he was on. It quoted him as saying: "Russia's last election was better than all previous ones. We should congratulate Russia. Meanwhile, Georgia is still learning."

After that performance, East Europeans are watching the rise of the Tories with foreboding. Sir Malcolm Rifkind causes particular alarm. He has repeatedly insisted that Georgia and the Ukraine should remain in Russia's sphere of influence and not be offered membership of Nato.

At a conference in Estonia before Christmas on what Europe should do about a resurgent Russia, Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Swedes, Finns and Ukrainian delegates listened to the British Tories' plans with growing dismay. "Are British Conservative politicians working for the Kremlin, or are they just stupid?" asked one delegate. Since they're almost certain to form our next government, Eastern Europe will find out soon enough.

'Ratbiter'

EU-phemisms

As long as Russia has oil and lots of tanks they can do what the hell they like

HER Majesty's Revenue and Customs is at last stepping up the pressure on offshore tax evaders with a promise to jail offenders who have emerged from a trawl of notorious places such as Liechtenstein, the Channel Islands and various Caribbean bolt-holes. So why does government still actively persist in promoting these tax havens?

After years of pressure, parliament's Treasury select committee recently turned its attention to the scourge of the tax haven and sought the foreign office's opinion on what several remote British territories were up to. "We need to recognise that there is significant international pressure to limit the role of the overseas territories in providing international financial services," came the reply. "If the pressure were to succeed... there are few options for replacing lost government revenue in other sectors. The UK government's position is to require, as far as possible, that overseas territories meet the highest levels of regulation while supporting the territories in the area of international finance."

Er, for "international finance" read tax avoidance and evasion services to the wealthy of the sort exposed last month by a US senate finance committee report into UBS bank, centred on Liechtenstein but involving cash channeled through British territories like Bermuda. The "highest levels of regulation", meanwhile, were exposed in another parliamentary report this year as pitifully inadequate to police the trillions of pounds stashed in the world's tax havens.

As tax dodging through havens costs developed and developing economies tens of billions every year, there are far cheaper ways to plug the holes in offshore territories' economies than by encouraging their dubious financial services. But the havens' biggest customers – City banks, hedge funds and private equity outfits – must be appeased. The taxman will be picking up the bill for a while yet.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

66 Age at which Sir Menzies Campbell was considered too elderly to lead Liberal Democrats

60 Age of Brian Eno, adviser to Liberal Democrats on "engaging young people with politics"

CONFERENCE PREVIEW

REPORTS that business lobbyists are deserting Labour are a little premature, to judge by the fringe timetable for the party conference in Manchester next month.

United Utilities is paying for a *New Statesman* meeting with **environment minister Phil Woolas** on the topic "What price clean water?" The firm's director, Clive Elphick, will sit alongside the minister, giving him a chance to explain why United Utilities was fined £7,000 in April for polluting a Bolton fishing lake, or why it was fined £20,000 for killing thousands of fish with aluminium last September.

With the Clarkson vote eating away at Labour's majority, ministers must be considering junking unpopular polices like congestion charges and road pricing. Presumably to forestall such a move, **Katpsch Traffic**, a German firm specialising in road-pricing technology, is paying for a meeting, "Will the cost of driving swing the next general election?", organised by Blairite lobby group, Progress. **Transport minister Rosie Winterton** will be joined on stage by Stephen Ladyman, a former minister who has made Clarkson-like noises, but who also works for **Itis Holdings**, a firm set to profit from road pricing.

Progress is also organising an invitation-only buffet breakfast where **Alan Milburn** can lay out his plans to get back in the cabinet – sorry, "reform public services" – under the title "Putting citizens in control". The meeting is paid for by **PricewaterhouseCoopers**, and so could more accurately be called "Putting consultants in control and sending citizens the bill."

Meanwhile the Smith Institute, criticised by the charity commission for its closeness to Gordon Brown, is also bringing businessmen and politicians together in a series of conference events.

Treasury secretary Kitty Ussher, for example, will be considering whether private equity is a "Hero or villain?" Labour's union supporters think private-equity men are get-rich-quick merchants, slashing jobs and conditions for profit. But will rising star Ussher agree? Unlikely. The event is sponsored by the **British Venture Capital Association**, and she shares the platform with its chief executive, Simon Walker.

Health minister Ben Bradshaw will speak at a meeting on healthy employees, sponsored by **Nestlé**, alongside Nestlé director David Batman. Nestlé wants to show it is helping the NHS by trying to keep its staff fit, ignoring the fact that its sweets and frosted breakfast cereals help make the rest of us fat.

"Well, that's resolved the leadership issue"

Another Smith Institute meeting on obesity, with **health minister Dawn Primarolo,** is being sponsored by **Nutricia**, the baby-food firm that trades in the UK as Cow & Gate. Thanks to his firm's generous donation, Nutricia's vice-president, David Algar, gets to join Primarolo at top table, where they will discuss obesity in toddlers. This apparent official support for Cow & Gate from a health minister is worth every penny to Nutricia, but the reality is that real mothers' milk and freshly cooked food are healthier for babies and toddlers than Cow & Gate's infant formula and processed jars.

Elsewhere **business secretary Shriti Vadera** will speak on the subject "Corporate tax: less equals more". As there is no question mark in the title, presumably Vadera is already committed to lowering business taxes in the hope this will raise more money. The meeting is paid for by the entirely unbiased **Confederation of British Industry**, and she will be joined by the CBI's director-general, Richard Lambert.

Treasury secretary Yvette Cooper will be talking about the "Cradle to grave" welfare state at an event paid for by **Legal & General**, alongside the firm's spin doctor John Godfrey. The worse the welfare state looks after our ageing population, the better for Godfrey's firm, who can sell them all kinds of exciting top-up pensions.

NEWS FROM THE SANDPIT

IF THE outgoing commander of British forces in Iraq, Maj Gen Barney White-Spunner, is right, British troops will soon be packing up and leaving. Security has improved, he says, and the Iraqis themselves have led "a crackdown" on Shia militia groups by phoning their friends and brothers in the Mehdi army and convincing them to put down their RPGs and AKs.

There are some cynics in the officers' mess, however, who remember an interview the Maj Gen gave just last month leaving the opposite impression ("The British military is likely to have a long-term role in Iraq, a top commander said today").

Sure, those on stag, or guard duty, report fewer incidents, but that is partly because the Brits have withdrawn from their old positions at the Basra Palace and are now billeted in the relative safety of Basra Airport.

Iraqis are delighted. Reports from the "Septics" up in Fallujah confirm that the latest KFC franchise, with its fryers, fries, bargain buckets and Colonel Sanders logo, is not only still standing but doing brisk business – mostly with American troops, admittedly, but it's a start.

But there is one group of Iraqis who are horrified at the thought of British troops leaving; in fact they are terrified for their lives. They are the translators who have worked with coalition forces since the 2003 invasion, particularly those who have worked with the Brits.

Translators are considered to be traitors by many Iraqis simply because they work for the coalition. Many have been murdered or tortured and their families are targeted by militias, gunmen and kidnappers who have been "betrayed" by them.

The Americans have given them green cards and the Danes have allowed translators to return to Denmark as refugees. But the Brits have taken a different view. Defence secretary Des "Swiss Toni" Browne is worried about the "scale" of the problem. Up to 20,000 Iraqis have worked with the British since 2003 and he is keen to put a cap on the numbers granted asylum in the UK. He has an eye on the similar number of Afghans who are doing similar work and who may, one day, require the same debt of gratitude.

In reality there are only 91 translators who are at serious risk of being murdered for helping the Brits in the most hostile environments possible, and it is disgraceful that an exception to the rules cannot be made for them.

'Squarebasher'

A housebuilding slump hit growth in the second quarter of the year as the UK's economic slowdown gathered pace, according to official estimates today.

PA

HIGH PRINCIPALS

THE MERGER of Manchester's two big further-education colleges this month will create a super-college with an annual budget of £130m – but can its bosses be trusted with that kind of money?

Peter Tavernor, current principal of Manchester College of Art and Technology (MANCAT), will head the new institution created by the merger with City College Manchester. But last month, MP Richard Bacon called for a thorough investigation of "what appears to be institutionalised fraud" at MANCAT.

The college has been investigated by both the National Audit Office (NAO) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) since allegations arose in 2004 that student attendance registers were being fiddled in order to claim extra public money.

The college is known to have paid out-of-court settlements to two former staff who raised concerns about the paperwork. In both cases, payment was conditional on signing a gagging clause. These staff were therefore never interviewed by the LSC or the NAO.

The college also destroyed auditable documents very quickly. Although records should be kept for six years, the NAO's Angela Hands told the public accounts committee (PAC) that MANCAT's destruction of records was "quite swift... I think it was within a year".

"While the college denies any wrongdoing," Bacon told the Commons, "it is hard to see how the public can have confidence in such exercises when potentially crucial paperwork has been destroyed and important witnesses have been gagged through confidentiality clauses in settlement agreements paid for with public money."

SCIENTISTS at the University of Central Lancashire (Uclan) are outraged at plans to lump them with acupuncturists and herbalists in the latest expansion of the range of courses on offer.

From September, Uclan will offer a BSc in acupuncture and MScs in both acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine. While some studies have found acupuncture to be "better than placebo" for pain, there are wide differences between the traditional explanations for its effectiveness and the scientific reasons for why it might work.

The degrees are offered in conjunction with the Northern College of Acupuncture, which explains acupuncture thus: "Our energy becomes stuck or depleted and we become ill. Acupuncture works directly with the body's *qi* to strengthen vitality and unravel the obstructions which cause ill health." Um, very scientific.

Mike Eslea, a senior lecturer in psychology, says that what rankles especially is that graduates of the courses will end up with a validated science degree. In an open letter to the vice-chancellor, Dr Eslea wrote: "Having these courses is damaging, and it makes us a laughing stock in the scientific community."

Uclan's reputation for science has been shaky since it started to offer an e-learning-based MSc in homeopathy. "Our hopes of being taken seriously as a research institution are being severely damaged by our association with such quackery," adds Dr Eslea, "but now we are adding yet more bogus therapy to our portfolio. What's next, astrology?"

NUMBER CRUNCHING

54% Percentage of students receiving A-level results this year who were girls

100% Percentage of students pictured receiving A-level results on front pages of newspapers this year who were girls

FIVE TV

Spooks: Code 9 (BBC3)

WAY back in December 2006, with BBC One's superlative spy drama *Spooks* at its height – Ruth had just safely sailed away up the river away from her nailbiting will-they-won't-they-oh-blimey-actually-they-won't relationship with Harry Pearce, and the pretty boy was busy drowning under the Thames barrier with her off of *Cold Feet* – BBC Three controller Julian Bellamy announced a spin-off entitled *Rogue Spooks* as part of his spring season.

Eighteen months, one channel controller and a name change later, the resulting show slithers out on Sundays in the middle of August. Has some unintended topicality – a fictional atrocity tragically reflected in reality – caused the scheduling delay? No. Make no mistake: **Spooks: Code 9** (you can bet they focus-grouped Codes One to Eight and found they didn't play well with the 16- to 24-year-old demographic) is limping out at the bottom of the year because it's the biggest heap of steaming radioactive waste ever to contaminate the name of a successful brand.

Not, that is, that it's allowed to get anywhere near its parent programme. To avoid any of the difficult questions thrown up by after-hours *Doctor Who* spin-off *Torchwood* ("What's Captain Jack been doing since he last saw the Doctor, Daddy?" "Shagging"), *Code 9* is set five years in the future, following the abject failure of Harry Pearce's mob to save London, which has been destroyed in a nuclear explosion.

This being a digital channel, it's a very minor nuclear explosion which takes place mostly in the distance and in the form of various bits of stock footage, allowing for some ghoulishly nostalgic disaster-spotting – "Isn't that Canary Wharf after the IRA bomb? And there are the poll-tax riots!" It also neatly removes any subsequent peril or tension – given that, as the voiceover informs us, unknown terrorists have already "incinerated over 100,000 people and given many more a death sentence through radiation", you're left asking: well, what's the worst that can happen if our heroes fail to save the day?

Not a lot, it would seem – which is fortunate, since the heroes in question are a bunch of pouty 19-year-olds who have been recruited solely on the strength of *Big Brother*-style audition videos, in which they compete to outdo one another in smuggery. "Terrorists are getting younger, so you're probably looking for younger spies," swaggers one blonde. "Am I right?"

Well, no dear, not really. Some older spies with experience in the field and training in how to spot and neutralise potential terrorists, whatever their vintage, might just come in useful. Ah, but they've all buggered off, as a helpful character explains in one of the great clunking lists of expository dialogue in which this show excels: "Twenty-five per cent of officers wiped out in the bomb. Half the remainder migrating to the private sector." *Really?* The disloyal bastards! But not to worry – our trusty band of school-leavers are so achingly patriotic that union flags are sometimes randomly superimposed on their faces – at least until the end of the first episode, when the director got bored and couldn't be bothered with that particular tic any more.

That innovation aside, it's cliché all the way: chases take place across rooftops before villains fail to grasp the proffered hand and plunge to their deaths; deceased characters leave valedictory videos which point out "If you're watching this, I must be dead" and both sexual tension and menace are signified by characters standing halitosis-inhalingly close to one another and wiggling their eyebrows a lot.

Regular shots of barbed wire, ID cards and surveillance cameras are intended to establish the Big Brother theme that is obviously going to be the series' big revelation ("You mean we're not the good guys after all?") but just serve to remind viewers what an editorial standby the cut to black-and-white CCTV has become. Even the trick of killing off a major character early in the story, as shockingly introduced by grown-up *Spooks* and recycled in the aforementioned *Torchwood,* is no longer remotely surprising, although the intended cries of "I can't believe they did that!" duly erupt when the corpse is replaced as unit leader by a gawky teen who has been a spy for slightly under 24 hours.

The real shock, however, is the quality of the spin-off's spin-offs: because this is BBC Three we are in the realm of 360-degree commissioning and multi-platform gubbins, which in this case boils down to a diverting fake "news from 2013" website and an impressive choose-your-own-adventure game which allows you to scan in your own face and play as a moving, breathing character in a tale that is far more exciting than anything on the marginally bigger screen. Since original ideas, convincing plots, decent dialogue and half-capable actors seem to be beyond the grasp of BBC Three's drama department, might it be better off – not to mention more in tune with its target audience – just abandoning around 270 degrees of their commissioning process and concentrating on becoming a quite capable little computer-games developer instead?

'Yoof'

MEDIA NEWS

"I DO get aggravated about being called a pornographer," stropped *Express* publisher and pornographer Richard Desmond two years ago. "As I see it, porn is illegal, and I don't do anything illegal. My TV stations are all sold legally in Britain."

Well, with a watchdog ruling last month, Desmond's business teetered even closer to his own definition: his company Portland Enterprises was fined for an "unacceptable and serious breach" of the broadcasting code in allowing "output equivalent to BBFC R-18 standard'" to go out on its Television X channel in June 2007.

R-18 is defined by the British Board of Film Classification as "a special and legally restricted classification primarily for explicit works of consenting sex between adults", and such material can only be sold in licensed sex shops. Regular prosecutions take place under the video recordings act 1984 of those who sell such material elsewhere – be it dodgy DVDs in pubs or by mail order over the phone or internet.

Desmond's company, which "unreservedly accepted" that its broadcast was unacceptable, was fined £25,000 – or, as it is known in the trade, half a Blue Peter.

DAVID SHUKMAN, the BBC's environment correspondent infamous for a gaffe that cost the corporation "a six-figure sum" when he wrongly accused an Omani diamond firm of having links with al-Qaeda, has openly criticised the BBC's obsession with "multimedia platforms".

Busy enough filing copy and, er, checking facts, BBC hacks now have to provide copy for the internet, podcasts, news bulletins and the 24-hour news channel – and the strain, he says, is beginning to show.

Shukman told the internal BBC News magazine that, while reporting from Midway Island, he had to provide "25 minutes of edited video, including three packages and nine promos; four TV lives; sequences for a 22-minute documentary; two long radio packages; four radio dispatches and too many radio lives to count; two online news pieces; five diary entries; countless stills; two video-on-demand pieces; and written and TV versions of an interactive Q&A".

The edited packages were included in the 6pm and 10pm News and were watched by more than a million licence-fee payers. The rest were seen or heard by very few.

In order to meet demand, correspondents are filing unedited material and relying on producers back in London to cut stories. Under such pressure, errors are far more likely. The BBC has cut the number of journalists within News, hiring instead a new raft of "multimedia" producers who clamour for material but have less of an idea about what the material "beamed in" actually means or how significant it is or isn't.

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC1

Anne Robinson: In sport, golf clubs and tennis rackets have a what spot?

Contestant: A "G" spot.

AR: Peter Brough, the 1950s radio ventriloquist, had a dummy whose name was Archie... what?

Contestant: Gemmill.

AR: In Roman Catholicism, baptism, confirmation and matrimony are three of the seven what?

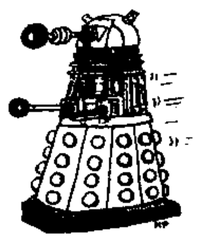
Contestant: Deadly sins.

AR: Archie Stirling, who launched the Scottish Voice Party in 2007, is the nephew of Sir David Stirling, who in 1941 founded which elite fighting force?

Contestant: The Liberal Democrats.

"I haven't bought any food, I'm afraid... I've lost all consumer confidence"

BIRTSPEAK 2.0



"The following competencies (behaviours and characteristics) have been identified as key to success in the job. Successful candidates are expected to demonstrate these competencies.

"Communication – able to get one's message understood clearly by adopting a range of styles, tools and techniques appropriate to the customer and the nature of the information.

"Resilience – manages personal effectiveness by managing emotions in the face of pressure, setbacks or when dealing with provocative situations. Demonstrates an approach to work that is characterised by commitment, motivation and energy.

"Flexibility – adapts and works effectively with a variety of situations, individuals or groups. Able to understand and appreciate different and opposing perspectives on an issue, to adapt an approach as the requirements of a situation change, and to change or easily accept changes in one's own organisation or job requirements."

– Job advert for a gardener at BBC Caversham

MODESTY BLAZE

"Growing up, my idols were Michael Parkinson, David Frost and Alan Whicker. They were peerless on TV and if anyone could combine all three, I modestly think I could be that man." – Piers "Morgan" Moron, *Daily Mail*.

LUVVIES

Roth is a great chronicler of American men. Was it your decision to Anglicise the character of David Kapesh?

I asked if I could be allowed to play him as English, because if I alter my voice, in any way – and I'm too darn good at accents – it's a mask. I felt that I loved this character and the journey so much that I would like to have as few masks as possible. I'd almost like to look down and see my own shoes, my own trousers. Of course I didn't wear my own clothes. But my wardrobe was chosen almost to mirror that which already exists in my own wardrobe.

BEN KINGSLEY
Time Out

Submitted by Jane Pearce.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

In the Courts

ANOTHER multi-million pound government IT cock-up is quietly playing itself out – this time in the courts service.

Back in April the lord chief justice, Lord Phillips, released his first review of how the courts are run. Buried inside was a criticism of HM Courts Service (HMCS) and its inability to provide an electronic document-submission system for the new Commercial Court by 2010, when it becomes the Business Court.

Though the move is still two years away, it is already clear HMCS will not have a relatively simple e-filing system set up by then, and it is unlikely to happen before 2011 at best. But freedom of information (FoI) requests reveal that nearly £5m has already been spent, half of which has gone to the inevitable "consultants" and the rest on a great deal of hot air.

Phase two of the Commercial Court IT (CCIT) project, aimed at providing an integrated diary and document repository, could easily have been ready by 2010 – or even by now. But an IT system that could have been piloted in the Commercial Court was delayed in favour of turning attention to a national courts e-filing system.

Of the £4.71m spent since 2005, just over £500,000 was spent externally on a system that should have ended up as a pilot of CCIT. Just overseeing all this cost almost £970,000 in civil-service time, almost twice as much as the IT itself. However, Whitehall spent £3.24m on a "national system" that does not exist in any form, £2.28m of which was on "consultants and contractors".

The original IT project was cancelled, according to the ministry of justice (MoJ), because "at a high level the functional requirement of the national solution is almost identical to the potential scope of CCIT phase 2". In other words the national system is just a big version of the small system – which in a normal world would mean that the small one should be piloted first, to find out if it works. But the MoJ says that doing this "ahead of a decision over the likely national technical solution would be unlikely to prove much technically that could be applied to a national rollout".

The most likely real explanation is that CCIT was ditched because it got lost in the changeover between the previous IT contractors to the justice system – including *Eye* favourites EDS and Accenture – and the new ones, Logica and Atos Origin, who are no better.

Somewhere in the great game of musical chairs that is government IT provision, Lord Phillips's little Commercial Court was forgotten, even though the firms that were fired still have other lucrative government contracts and continue to employ each other, making a mockery of sacking them in the first place. Meanwhile, the taxpayer picks up the tab. Latest estimates place the cost of setting up a national e-filing system in the £80m range. The final bill could be much higher. Which is why IT consultants are among the few people in the land who can make libel barristers shake their heads and say: "We're in the wrong job, you know."

"Is that not a tin of screws that may or may not come in useful... I put it to you that you've turned into your father"

WORLD OF HYPE

WOULD-BE journalists attending courses at Harlow College have a new ambassador to look up to. Step forward Phil Hall, whose appointment last week was hailed by the college as a "real coup". But those lucky enough to study under Hall, a former *News of the Screws* and *Hello!* editor, shouldn't expect any useful guidance on the pursuit of fearless reporting in the face of power and money.

Since leaving celebrity journalism, Hall has set up as a PR wallah and found a niche for himself in the world of Premier League football. His first client was West Ham United, where his responsibilities involved leaning on tabloid editors to keep stories about manager Alan Pardew out of the newspapers and puffing up the involvement of agent Kia Joorabchian.

Hall did not do an altogether successful job. Joorabchian's bid for the club fell through, amid unwelcome publicity about the arrest warrant issued for him in Brazil. It got worse when the contract of Carlos Tevez, whom Joorabchian had brought to the club, was found to have broken rules on third-party ownership. The Premier League concluded that former West Ham chief executive Paul Aldridge had told it "a direct lie" during its investigation into the transfer and hit the club with a record fine.

Hall now works with Manchester City where he has been reunited with his old friends Aldridge and Joorabchian. Aldridge is chief operating officer, while the agent operates behind the scenes, advising owner, Thaksin Shinawatra. The deposed Thai dictator was facing corruption charges and his record is so dodgy that even Bell Pottinger, never usually squeamish about taking briefs from shifty politicians, walked away from the task in June.

Last week Shinawatra jumped bail and press reports suggested the manager had nearly walked out when it looked as if players would be sold without his consent. The response was typical Hall. Libel bullies Schillings played bad cop with letters to sports editors, while Hall acted as good cop, trying to call in favours with old friends. Just the kind of ambassador for young hacks to emulate!

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

L'ORÉAL ACCUSED OF ALTERING BLACK SINGERS' SKIN COLOUR!
L'ORÉAL
IT'S A RIDICULOUS ACCUSATION. WE DON'T ALTER SKIN COLOURS. I MEAN, LOOK AT THIS WONDERFUL PICTURE OF NAOMI CAMPBELL!!!
MD
ERM..... ACTUALLY THAT'S CLAUDIA SCHIFFER!!!
MD

MEDICINE BALLS

Pass the Buck

"NEW" Labour made a big issue of publishing hospital-specific survival rates for three operations last month on the NHS Choices website (www.nhs.uk). But much of the information has mysteriously disappeared and no guidance is available for any of my local hospitals other than "the survival rate is within the expected range".

When the figures were initially released (and published in the *Guardian* on 11 July), NHS director Bruce Keogh assured us that "no hospital was unsafe" despite some hospitals having nearly four times the expected mortality rates for repair of abdominal aortic aneurysms (AAA, a potentially fatal ballooning of the main blood vessel).

Quite how this equates with safety is unclear. As data is collated from different hospitals, a "statistical outlier detection system" should pick up units that are a long way below average. This should then prompt a swift investigation to ascertain whether this is down to bad luck (eg a run of deaths occurring by chance together in an otherwise good set of results) or because a surgical team takes on harder operations in sicker patients. Or is it because the team has gone off the boil or is struggling to learn a new technique? Most pertinently, does surgery need to be suspended pending a fuller investigation to protect patients?

This level of scrutiny appears beyond the department of health (DoH), despite a paper in the *British Journal of Surgery* from St George's hospital which found that there are indeed significant outliers in the UK for AAA repair. But the DoH has never been keen on "getting involved in clinical matters". As far back as 1989, the Bristol unit (now one of the best in the UK) was identified as a significant outlier for paediatric cardiac surgery but was allowed to struggle on until 1995, when as many as 35 babies under one died unnecessarily.

This information was hidden from the public; but the latest approach seems to be to publish it (if only momentarily) and then let patients choose whether they'd like to go to their nearest trust with cheap parking, nice coffee and four times the mortality rate. Or make a long trip to a strange hospital with a better survival rate (parking permitting).

The royal colleges are supposed to set statistical standards in medicine and surgery but, like the department of health, they have generally shied away for fear that someone high profile and litigious (perhaps even a senior member of the college) might fall short. But passing the buck on to patients to choose what mortality rates they're prepared to accept without any attempt to reign in hospitals that are way off the scale is a dereliction of duty.

Collecting outcomes is clearly a good thing, but they need intelligent statistical analysis and action against units that are a long way behind the pack. You can't just say all units are "safe" without a statistical definition of what safety means. Statistics don't provide all the answers, particularly if a unit does so few of an operation that the figures are meaningless.

Complex surgery should be concentrated in units that have the resources and expertise to do lots of operations and prove they can do them well. But instead of stopping dabblers from operating, the DoH is just publishing their figures and hoping either that patients won't choose to go there, or that surgeons will choose not to do occasional operations knowing that one death will send them plummeting to the bottom of the league. "New" Labour doesn't want to be seen to be the one to close a local unit if the figures aren't up to scratch, because closure of anything always loses votes. So it's all down to patient choice (when the figures reappear).

M.D.

SIGNAL FAILURES

Shock and ORR

WHILE fares rocket, the rail industry continues to invest in more bureaucracy.

Take the case of the Department for Transport (DafT) and the rolling-stock leasing companies (Roscos). In June 2006, DafT said the Roscos had overcharged by £100m, chiefly for British Rail's former fleet. The office of rail regulation (ORR) then investigated for almost a year before passing the matter to the competition commission (CC), which now points the finger at... the DafT and its beloved rail franchising.

"Detailed specification by the DfT during the franchising process often means that the only available and suitable rolling stock is that currently used," says the CC. It highlights the DafT's "expressed unwillingness" in some cases to support new trains. It says the DafT should reduce "the degree of detail" in franchise specifications and stop ruling out new trains.

Regarding the rip-off charges for ex-BR trains, *Eye* 1151 noted: "Franchises which rely on those trains have no alternative because spare trains aren't available, so the leasing companies are free to set ludicrous charges. When the Northern Rail franchise was devised, officials could have threatened to buy new trains unless charges for the old ones were cut substantially. Instead they vetoed new trains."

The bureaucrats have now reached the same conclusion; and the CC hasn't finished yet: in January it will publish a final decision and remedies – which won't include stripping jobs or knighthoods from mandarins who sold BR's trains for a song to the Roscos in 1996.

By January the CC may have another big rail case. Network Rail (NR) is threatening to go to the commission because the rail regulator reckons NR will need less cash for 2009-14 than it is demanding. The process of determining NR's funding started in 2005 and has kept hundreds of ORR officials and consultants busy. Will they be unemployed when the process eventually ends? No: allocating NR's cash for 2014-19 must start in good time.

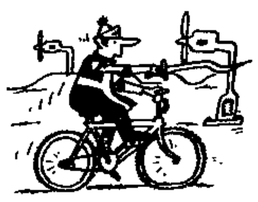
The ORR berates NR for its inefficiency and failings, but nobody monitors the ORR's own "efficiency". The ORR, which already employs 346 people, now wants to get even fatter. "We should play a bigger role in identifying the longer-term issues," said chairman Chris Bolt and chief executive Bill Emery, launching another consultation last month. "We will need to change further over the next five years if we are to play a full role."

He would like more involvement in decisions over new signalling and control systems, electrification and the need for extra capacity to relieve the network. "We could also do more to address issues of direct interest to rail passengers and freight users."

How about letting rail managers manage the railway rather than bureaucrats? That would be far too radical: the railway would have to be unified and nationalised, which would divert cash from bureaucracy to services and leave hundreds of pen-pushers at ORR, DafT and NR (and their consultants) redundant. Turkeys don't vote for Christmas, do they?

'Dr B. Ching'

ECO-GNOMICS



More hot air

SINCE Eco-Gnomics first reported Christopher Broadbent's frustration trying to erect a very small wind turbine on his remote farm (*Eye* 1215), courtesy of Defra guidance requiring a noise survey that effectively doubles its cost, the sorry tale has become farcical.

Just after the *Eye* story appeared, Broadbent received a letter out of the blue from the Labour MP for Hove, Celia Barlow. "Dear Christopher," she purred enthusiastically, "I am writing in response to your letter and information dated 7 July 2008 regarding your request to build a wind turbine on your farm. I agree with you that increasing renewables will help benefit the environment... I appreciate your consideration of the environment and your comments, which further demonstrate your desire to be more environmentally friendly."

All very nice. Except Broadbent had never heard of Ms Barlow. She is not his MP and he had never written to her. He wrote back, informing her of this and pointing out that his plans to "help the environment" were in fact being obstructed by the very government whose objectives she had dutifully reproduced from Labour party spin documents.

Shortly afterwards Broadbent received news from Defra, the department whose guidance on noise surveys had derailed his plans in the first place. A letter informed him that "the issues you have raised fall within the responsibility of the Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform" (DBERR) and advised that Defra had therefore passed his letter on.

DBERR then weighed in. After a few paragraphs of standard guff on "meeting the energy challenge", the document affirmed: "We are committed to promoting microgeneration and published a Microgeneration Strategy in March 2006... Microgeneration installations (excluding wind and air source heat pumps) which have little or no impact beyond the host property are now permitted development." Had they read Broadbent's complaint in more detail, they would have quickly noticed that his proposed turbine does of course fall into the "wind" category, and that none of this was therefore of the slightest help. As Broadbent's initial correspondence made clear, the issue was never with planning permission but with the Defra guidance invoked by Rother district council to insist on a costly noise survey, despite its total irrelevance to the proposed site.

So in less than two weeks, Broadbent has been congratulated on his efforts by an MP he never contacted, been told by Defra that despite its own guidance being the obstacle it isn't Defra's problem, and then completely misunderstood by DBERR, which admitted that the very type of power Broadbent is trying to install is in fact "excluded from permitted development" (which it isn't). Such government incompetence makes the prognosis for Britain's climate bleak indeed.

"So they were right about global warming..."

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

BARKING MAD

DEMOSTHENES, where are you now? Why, debating with the shades of Cicero and Burke in the genteel east London borough of Barking & Dagenham.

Last year *Eye* 1185 reported that local BNP leader, Richard Barnbrook, had been ejected from a social gathering after strenuously objecting to being called a poof by a Labour rival. Now we hear of another frank exchange of views, this time at the count of a by-election where Labour lost a B&D council seat to the Tories. When someone called Barnbrook a poof (the worst thing you can say in these parts, apparently, to a prominent member of the BNP), Barnbrook responded by calling his tormentor a "fascist".

Meanwhile, an emotional Liam Smith, deputy leader of the council, responded to some good-natured taunting from Sue Connelly, mother of B&D Tory councillor Neil Connelly, by calling her a "fat fucking dyke". Ooh!

Mrs Connelly reported the incident to Inspector Knacker and the council's standards committee. Smith received a caution under section 5 of the public order act for calling mother-of-four Connelly a dyke, although the CPS declined to take the matter further because "in this case, after careful consideration, it was decided the word 'dyke' was not used in a homophobic way". Er, right.

As for the standards committee, it decided Smith didn't have a case to answer as he "wasn't there as a councillor, but as a normal person" – despite the fact that he was wearing a badge saying "Cllr Liam Smith" at the time and that "normal" people – heaven forbid – aren't allowed into election counts.

One way and another, then, a good night for Barking & Dagenham's long tradition of civilised political intercourse.

WHITE SHITTY

SO HOW goes London mayor Boris Johnson's pledge to build 50,000 new "affordable" homes in London over the next three years (*Eye* 1215)?

Ask the residents of White City, a deprived pocket of the prosperous west London borough of Hammersmith & Fulham. A month after BoJo's election, developer Building Better Health amended its planning application for 179 homes and a new polyclinic in Bloemfontein Road, removing all the scheme's social housing element. In July the Tory council, which also owns the land, approved the plans.

At City Hall, planning officers were displeased. In a report on 15 July they called the absence of any social housing in the plans "unacceptable". With a new health centre, a park and schools nearby, they argued, it was the ideal spot for new socially rented homes.

Then, two weeks later, the GLA officers produced a second report, which concluded the development was acceptable after all. The "zero provision of social rent remains disproportionate", they said, but "planning benefits arising from the scheme are also disproportionate". What benefits? Er, the new health centre, shops, park restoration, etc, of which they were aware when they wrote their first report. Just fancy that!

Deputy mayor Ian Clement approved the scheme and Boris was spared the embarrassment of a clash with close political allies. Hammersmith & Fulham leader Stephen Greenhalgh served on the mayor's "Forensic Audit Panel", looking for corruption at the London Development Agency. When interviewed by property mag *Estates Gazette* earlier this month, Greenhalgh cringe-makingly flourished a letter from the mayor with the words: "Look, I have a letter here from Boris telling me how wonderful I am."

Local Labour MP Andrew Slaughter smells an old and familiar rat in all this.

"The council says there is too much social rented housing in the borough, although as a percentage of the whole housing stock it is below the inner London average," he says. "They aim to reduce the amount of affordable rented homes by a combination of demolition, sales and setting a zero target on new developments. Like Lady Porter in Westminster, Hammersmith & Fulham council believe social tenants are more inclined to support parties other than the Tories. The spectre of gerrymandering is returning to west London 20 years on."

● A LEAFLET arrives in the *Eye*'s office produced by Agresso [*sic*] the Dutch IT firm who signed a "memorandum of understanding" with OGCbuying.solutions [*double sic*] the "trading arm" of the Office of Government Commerce at the end of 2006.

The deal offered public sector bodies big discounts on financial software and was touted as providing £12m in savings over its three-year life. The document, in Q&A form, bigs up the benefits of "partnerships" with Agresso. "For example," it trills, "it has recently assisted Capita in a project that has enabled South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils to reduce their IT, processing and manpower costs by sharing services."

Could this by any chance be the same Vale of White Horse council where, after outsourcing financial services to Capita, *Eye* 1193 reported last year, 300 workers had not been paid, the council's electricity supplier threatened to sue for non-payment, service providers refused to take council business for fear they wouldn't be paid and – horror of horrors – councillors didn't get their allowances on time? Indeed it could.

THE EXE FILES

IN JANUARY 2006 we ran a story about how East Devon district council had put up two fingers to local opinion and was pressing ahead with a plan for a giant Wal-Mart/Asda supermarket on the banks of the beautiful River Exe estuary (*Eye* 1148).

Just a month later, Tory council leader Sara Randall Johnson announced that the council was dropping its support for the scheme – and passing up the chance of loads of Wal-Mart wonga – because it had "listened" to the public. "We do of course accept a democratic consensus opinion," she claimed. The Exe estuary, it seemed, had been saved.

Our story gave a pat on the back to East Devon MP Hugo Swire, who had just become a member of newly elected Tory leader David Cameron's apparently green-tinged shadow cabinet. Swire had presented a petition signed by 11,000 opponents of the scheme to the council and to the House of Commons. He told MPs of his constituents' "considerable dismay... at the thought that Exmouth's most valuable asset, its waterfront along the estuary, might be developed".

Alas, two years is a long time in local politics. Exmouth residents are now "considerably dismayed" to find that the Wal-Mart/Asda plan did not go away after all; it merely lurked out of view for a while. The Tories are promoting it again, this time with added inducements such as the incorporation of a new sports centre, swimming pool and library – although the town already has a perfectly good sports centre, swimming pool and library.

Randall Johnson has stopped "listening" to residents, instead jamming her fingers in her ears and humming loudly whenever the subject is raised. Like the council leader, Swire, who residents had thought was on their side, snubbed a big public meeting organised by protesters in June. He now tells constituents he isn't bovvered about plonking a giant supermarket by the estuary, as long as it is "of a distinguished architectural nature". Eh?

When Randall Johnson is not wooing supermarkets to come and ruin beautiful landscapes and nature reserves, in her day job she heads PR for Exeter-based budget airline FlyBe, which was caught earlier this year filling empty seats with actors to avoid penalty charges. Good to know Devon's environment is in such safe hands.

● RED FACES in York, where in April the city council spent £40,000 equipping its fleet of 40 dustcarts, gritters and gulley cleaners with satnav systems.

The purchase was greeted with much Littlejohnish hilarity – the binmen needed satnav because they made their rounds so infrequently, etc. In fact the council says the kit is mainly a tracking system, "which shows where vehicles are at any given time and which we use to manage and monitor our refuse and gritting fleets for maximum efficiency" – and is also no doubt useful in keeping tabs on skiving drivers. Alas, not quite so useful any more, for eight of the devices have been nicked from vehicles in the depot.

"The council is carrying out an internal review to see whether security at the site can be improved," says a spokesman. By locking vehicles at night, perhaps?

LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELDS

FOR all environment secretary Hilary Benn's fine words about "bringing green spaces within reach of our many towns and cities", the government is doing nothing to stop local councils taking more of them away.

Indeed, during a recent wide-ranging speech that he gave at Barnes Wetland Centre in south-west London, Benn mentioned that as a schoolboy he had played every week on the neighbouring Barn Elms playing fields. What he didn't say was that a large chunk of his old stomping ground was now under threat from a private health club.

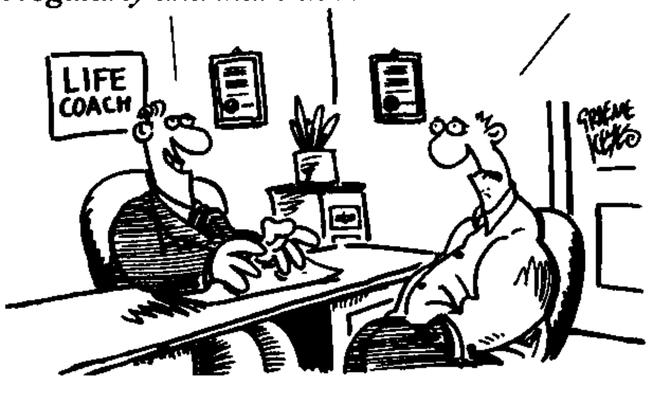
Richmond's Lib Dem council plans to sell 5.5 acres of the public playing fields to a private developer to raise funds to upgrade the currently shabby facilities and tackle drainage problems on the rest of the land. An indoor private health club and large car park are proposed. While Barn Elms is large, not all of it is suitable for sports pitches, so the loss of prime playing fields will have a big impact, say local campaigners from Barnes Vision.

The campaign group has even managed to demonstrate that there is in fact no need to sell the land in the first place. By approaching such bodies as the Football Foundation and the London Marathon Charitable Trust, it has itself drummed up promises of the £2.5m needed for repairs. Despite this, Richmond council has still not called off the sale and a final decision is expected next month. It will be closely watched by one Barnes Vision supporter in particular – Tony Benn, father of the hapless Hilary.

PS: Even if Richmond does call off the sale, another part of the site owned by Wandsworth council will remain under threat. The council has announced a deal with private five-a-side football firm Goals plc to build 10 floodlit artificial pitches (not to mention "improved parking"), although it would first need planning permission from Richmond. "Five-a-side has come a long way from coats-down-in-the-park days," says Goals' website. Yes it has – for one thing, coats-down-in-the-park used to be free.

"Breathe in...breathe out...breathe in...breathe out...take food and drink regularly and that's about it"

"I just kinda thought there'd be more to it"



NOOKS and CORNERS

UNTIL they were suddenly closed two years ago by Lewisham council, the Forest Hill Pools were the oldest working swimming baths in London (*Eye* 1156).

After neglecting the building – erected in 1884-85 – for years, the council claimed that it was structurally unsound. Rather than repair and restore this valuable local amenity, it proposed to replace it. Later, it promised to consider refurbishment while claiming this would cost more than a new pool. Then, last February, after two years of indecision with the pools left empty and rotting and no public consultation, the Labour mayor of Lewisham, Sir Steve Bullock, announced that Forest Hill Pools are to be demolished.

The Sydenham Society and others pressed for the baths to be listed. English Heritage declined, on the grounds that the building had been too much altered. However, the inspector reported that it "has very strong local interest" and makes "a positive contribution to the streetscape, and along with Holy Trinity School, Forest Hill Library and Louise House, form a distinct group of buildings which reflect the Victorians' enthusiasm to education and health reform".

Forest Hill Pools and Louise House (left)

But this is of no concern to the forward-looking Lewisham councillors. For while the Public Library of 1901, being listed, is safe for the moment, it is now proposed to demolish Louise House as well. This handsome "Old English" red-brick building was built in 1890-91 to a design by Thomas Aldwinkle, the architect of the Forest Hill Pools next door (and of the St Pancras Public Baths – which are listed). Originally the Industrial Home for Girls, Louise House has also been long neglected by its owner, again the London borough of Lewisham.

In a gesture towards public consultation, the council has recently put forward three "conceptual options" for a "new leisure centre". Option 1 merely offers a new pool; option 2 a "larger leisure building" together with new housing and retail space; while option 3 envisages "a further feature building which acts as a local landmark" – that is, a seven-storey block of flats. Of course, the option not being offered is the one many locals want: keeping and repairing all or part of the existing Victorian swimming pool building and the preservation of Louise House.

So much for local democracy. For there is a realistic alternative. A local campaign group, "Save the Face of Forest Hill", has prepared an outline design for a new swimming pool which retains the neo-Jacobean frontage of the old building together with Louise House. But this has been spurned by Lewisham council – after all, it would not be as potentially profitable as building new flats.

I know I have been banging on and on in this column about the closure of interesting, functional swimming pools, but it is a scandal that local authorities claim they are too expensive when obscene amounts of public money are being thrown at the London Olympics – which will do nothing for people all over Britain who might care to exercise by swimming.

To highlight this scandal, Ian Dungavell, director of the Victorian Society, is now in the middle of a "1,000-year swim". He is visiting the 13 pools which are still in use – out of more than 50 Victorian and Edwardian swimming baths which are listed – swimming a lap for each year the building has been standing (a total distance equivalent to swimming the English Channel). This swimathon ends on 29 August at the Dulwich Public Baths, a pool complex designed by Spalding & Cross and built in 1890-92 which has recently been restored.

Now the Dulwich Baths are a mere seven years younger than the nearby Forest Hill Pools. So if the London borough of Southwark can maintain this late Victorian pool, why can't Lewisham do the decent thing by the pool in Forest Hill it so scandalously neglected for so long? The answer, of course, is money – although Lewisham council has yet to demonstrate that building an exciting new pool is cheaper than repairing the old one.

SWIMMING pools are not the only type of building being needlessly wasted. In Bradford, there is the Odeon cinema, once one of the largest outside London.

Designed by William Illingworth and built as the New Victoria in 1929-30, it is threatened by the gratuitous and destructive plans for inner city "regeneration" sold to gullible Bradford city council by the posturing Will Alsop, architect (*Eye *1129). Closed eight years ago, the council-sponsored Bradford Centre Regeneration allowed the building to be acquired by a company called Yorkshire Forward. But there is opposition, mainly from BORG – "the Bradford Odeon Rescue Group" – which has now produced the first issue of a free newspaper: the* Odeon Observer. *This reveals that Yorkshire Forward has done nothing about the deliberately severed drainpipes within the building; that, although this handsome cinema is not listed (it ought to be), the Theatre's Trust has put it on its "Top Ten at risk" list; and that a local entrepreneur is willing to convert part of the neglected building into an hotel while retaining the 2,200-seat auditorium.

Needless to say, the apparatchiks and mediocrities who run poor old Bradford don't want to know. So all strength to BORG.

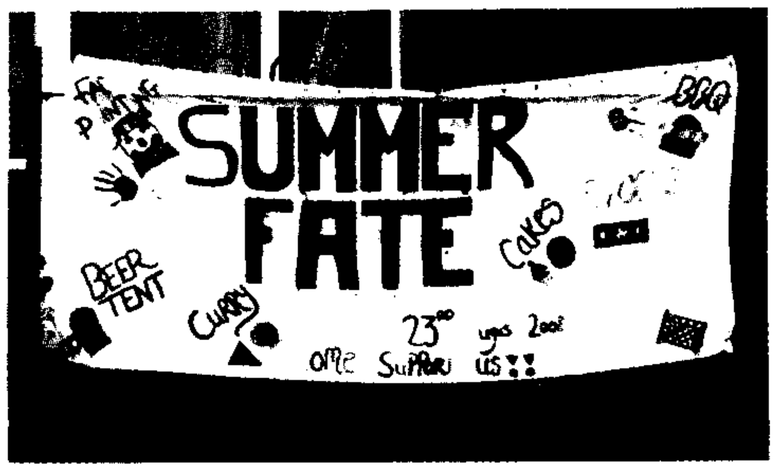
'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

All the critics are slagging off Tracey, saying she wallows in self-pity, and is always fishing for sympathy.
SCOTTISH NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART
TRACEY EMIN:
20 YEARS
A RETROSPECTIVE
I feel really sorry for her.

I-SPY *William Temple Church, London SE2*



Submitted by Bob Janes. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

FOR every performing musician in Britain who manages to end his or her career on a high, shored up by family, friends and savings in the bank, there are 20 more who don't. And if there is one support organisation those 20 feel they can turn to, it's the Musicians Benevolent Fund.

Among other things, this organisation runs Ivor Newton House, a retirement home where old, frail singers, instrumentalists, conductors and their ilk can end their days in an environment that recognises what they once were and keeps them in contact with music.

Named after an accompanist who was typical of its residents in having led a life of achievement without stardom, Ivor Newton House is the only place of its kind in Britain. For decades it has been an institution to which large numbers of musical volunteers have gladly given their time and effort. But no more.

Inexplicably, and inexcusably, the MBF has just announced that it is closing Ivor Newton down. The residents – some in their 90s – have been given notice. And although the MBF has packaged its announcement with due expressions of regret and a list of largely irrelevant, entirely feeble excuses, the callousness of the decision is revealed in a statement admitting that the house is not being closed for lack of money (the MBF is fairly well-endowed) but for "key operational reasons" (newspeak for "we can't be bothered any more").

When Ivor Newton's residents were told the news they reacted with predictable distress: one collapsed and had to be taken to hospital. Moved by their plight, the Musicians Union and Unison are discussing the possibility of legal action to prevent closure, probably in the form of an application for judicial review.

The problem, though, is that once you bring in lawyers you relieve the MBF of money that would otherwise go to the derelict musicians you're trying to protect. So no one wins, except m'learned friends.

A better option might be to shame the council members of the MBF in whose names this despicable business is being conducted. Looking down that list – which includes Sir David Willcocks, Dame Janet Baker, Sir John Dankworth, Dame Cleo Laine, Sir Colin Davis, Sir Neville Marriner and more – you can't help noticing how very few of them are in the first flush of youth. It shouldn't be too difficult for these personages, however eminent, to imagine themselves in the place of Ivor Newton residents and ask: is this good behaviour? With perhaps the supplementary: do I really want to be remembered as the great musician who kicked other, not so great musicians out of their retirement home?

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Letters

Aisle be damned

Sir,

I have been castigated by your columnist Piloti for the seemingly wholesale destruction of one of the churches in my care (Nooks & Corners, 1216). It seems that your publication takes great delight in denigrating the Church of England and its clergy, but I wish that you at least attempt to get your facts right.

● *I am not a "new" incumbent, I have been in this benefice for over four and a half years.*

● *The fittings that you ascribe to Comper have not been removed but are still in place. The light provided by these fittings was hopelessly inadequate and the safety of the public had been brought into question. In addition, our current architect examined the faculty records of this church, which are held at the Somerset county records office, as far back as 1905 and I have searched through every scrap of paper that we hold in the church and nowhere can we find any evidence that they are Comper fittings.*

● *I have never described Comper's work in the manner described in your article.*

● *In keeping with many churches, we are trying to enable the church to be used by a greater number of people within the community by reordering the north aisle but every relevant authority has been consulted and, as yet, we have not received approval for it. I did not realise that Private Eye needed to be consulted as well?*

● *There is no intention of "tarmacing" over graves to make a car park and none of it could be done without the express permission of the planning authorities in Taunton as well as the diocesan advisory committee (DAC).*

● *At no time did I or the parochial church council ignore the DAC in relation to the lighting but we were advised by the electrical engineer, who had been a member of the DAC, that we did not need a faculty as it had already been covered by his report. We therefore acted in good faith in having new light fittings installed.*

The Church comes in for a great deal of "stick" today for being remote from the communities it serves, yet when we try to make our buildings work, we are criticised for that too. Damned if you do and damned if you don't. Well, the church that I serve is not a museum and Comper is not the second son of God, he was a man and sometimes the work of architects can be improved upon for the greater good. You may see the church as a mausoleum, but I do not.

Yours faithfully,
REV MICHAEL WISHART,

Taunton, Somerset.

"Jesus Christ, what now? I'm trying to write my fucking sermon!"

Brum note

Sir,

Re: Scenes You Seldom See (Eye 1216) – "I find the Birmingham accent so musical and expressive". Come on now, I expect a much higher standard of satire from you than reducing it to reading this tiresome old chestnut again. Hard up for any ideas, were we? Contrary to popular belief, we Brummies don't all sound like Carl Chinn or Amy Turtle from the old Midlands-based TV soap Crossroads.

MALCOLM ALLEN,

Birmingham.

Medicine balls-up

Sir,

Glad to see the Eye tradition of getting names wrong still flourishes (Medicine Balls, Eye 1216). We are the Care Quality Commission, not the Quality Care Commission.

The Healthcare Commission won't disappear up our fundament but will be embraced by the new Care Quality Commission and we will carry forward proudly its values of independent and tough evidence and information on the quality of health and social care. Fundamental!

Yours sincerely,
BARBARA YOUNG,

Chair, Care Quality Commission.

Lookalike

Jagger

Hatter

Sir,

I could not help noticing the eerie resemblance of the infamous pensioner and knight of our realm Mick Jagger to Tenniel's portrait of the Mad Hatter in Carroll's Alice in Wonderland. Could their madness be in some way related ?

MICHAEL HOROVITZ,

London, W11.

Market farces

Sir,

The idea of banks competing with Tesco by selling fruit and veg at their branches (Eye 1216) is not so far-fetched. Around the mid-1950s, when supermarkets were not yet the plague they are today, the grocers in the town of Rotterdam clubbed together and discounted or simply gave away towels and dishcloths to their customers. The textile shopkeepers, infuriated by their loss of business, replied by selling similarly discounted coffee on a substantial scale. The grocers quickly got the message.

Walter G. Horn,

Via email.

Bearded wonder

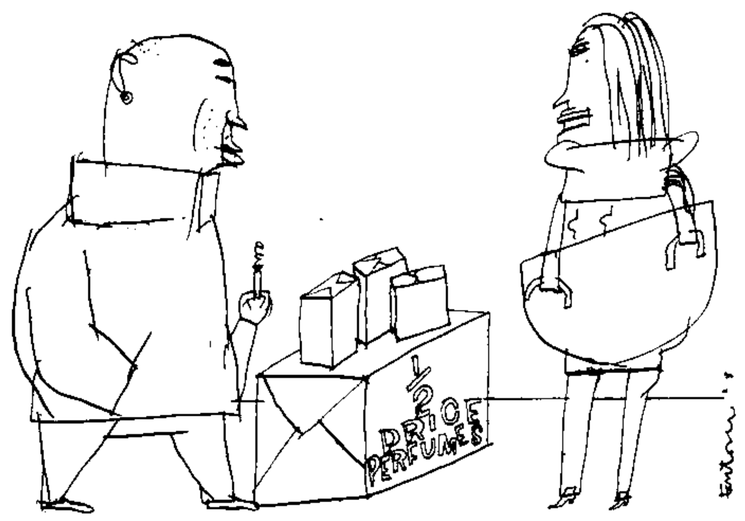
Sir,

Yes, you are, of course, right. All men with beards look the same, and this explains why it took so long to track down Radovan Karadzic (Lookalike, Eye 1216). How come, however, that you failed to include Richard Branson in your list of lookalikes?

Regards,
KEITH FLETT,

London N17.

Scenes You Seldom See



"Don't be daft, lady. Genuine Chanel No. 5, at three quid a bottle?"

Hamilton academic

Sir,

With reference to your Worstseller Chart (Eye 1215), it is grossly inaccurate to imply that Mark Hughes's Lewis Hamilton, The Full Story *is some kind of cut-and-paste creation. If you cared to check, you'll find it contains a lot more interesting detail about the subject's background than the official autobiography, largely because the author spent an inordinate amount of time tracking down almost anybody who had ever laid a finger on one of the subject's karts or cars.*

I'll concede that Mark is a friend and a travelling companion, and that I witnessed him writing the book throughout much of the 2007 grand prix season (or, rather, didn't, because he often stayed in to work of an evening rather than joining the rest of us for beer and sustenance), but that doesn't alter the facts.

Warmest regards,
SIMON ARRON,

Beckenham, Kent.

Tilting at windmills

Sir,

In his marvellously technically detailed criticism of wind farms (Letters, 1216) MV Ward forgot to mention that they also: use more energy in their construction than they produce in their lifetime; need to consume electricity to keep them turning when the wind isn't blowing; chop up all passing birds into mincemeat; distract drivers on nearby roads causing them to crash; and oh yes, turn people's brains to mush so that they believe any old tosh they read on anti-windfarm websites.

CHRIS PADLEY,

Market Rasen, Lincs.

Sir,

So MV Ward of Stilton [sic] is worried about the impact of six wind turbines on the appearance of the village of Stilton in Dorset? I am sure that the villagers of Ferrybridge in South Yorkshire, home to Europe's first 2,000MW coal-fired power station and a supplier of electricity to Stilton, will be so grateful to know that someone is protecting this country's heritage from the ravages of energy generation. Let us hope that the good people of Ferrybridge, which has an archaeological record dating back at least 3,000 years earlier than the Domesday Book entry for Stilton, can continue to supply energy to Dorset. And I urge readers to support MV Ward in opposing wind turbines as tall as Salisbury Cathedral when Ferrybridge has eight perfectly good cooling towers which just by luck happen to be the tallest in Europe.

Hurrah for Stilton and its bucolic fields! Hurrah for MV Ward and the protectors of Dorset!

NICK BEALE,

Newcastle upon Tyne.

Photo Opportunity

Sir,

Since her brush-off from the polo set, Ms Katie Price has been complaining that "chinless wonders" are afraid of her. But is their fear unjustified? I wonder if you have in your files any photographic evidence of how she treats a chinless wonder when she meets one?

Yours,
ENA B. JORDAN,
London W1.

Chomsky and chums

Sir,

In his attack on Ratbiter's defence of his article, Stefan Denis (Letters, Eye 1215) cites Noam Chomsky's Nelsonian comment "I see no anti-Semitic implications in denial of the existence of gas chambers or even the denial of the Holocaust". Chomsky's argument was that "if a person ignorant of modern history were told of the Holocaust and refused to believe that humans are capable of such monstrous acts, we would not conclude that he is an anti-Semite".

A brilliant argument aside from one minor flaw – it's complete bollocks. What if someone has studied modern history and continues to prefer dangerous fiction to fact? Were someone to be told of the gulags and, unable to believe that humans were capable of such, conclude that they were in fact holiday camps and persisted in such belief despite the evidence we might justifiably conclude that they are at best deeply misguided and at worst an apologist for Stalinism.

As for the "mistranslation" of Ahmadinejad's now infamous aspiration, the Grauniad blog to which Mr Denis refers us renders the translation thus: "the regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time". What this undoubtedly hugely significant difference proves is beyond me, except perhaps that some professional translators may prefer to translate idioms literally and some to translate them into their nearest equivalent in English.

In contrast to Mr Denis' reliance on the Eye to criticise "the kind of people" to whom the supposed mistranslation has proved politically useful, I must confess that I had always assumed that part of the Eye's job was to expose humbug and skewed logic at whatever end of the political spectrum they might arise.

More power to your organ!

Yours faithfully,
JONATHAN STANLEY,
Via email.

Sir,

Might I advise David Whippman (Letters, 1216) that condescension-by-interjection is no substitute for cogency? He regards "equating Nazis with Holocaust deniers" as justified by, er, a "large overlap between the two groups"; states that Chomsky's views on Israeli policy are just a special case of his – ahem – anti-Jewish prejudice, which involves reflex "sympathy and support" for Holocaust denial; is inclined to believe that "fundamentalist" Iran wants (eh?) to "kill all the Jews", though all 25,000 Jewish Iranians felt secure enough curtly to rebuff a recent offer of increased emigration payments; and suggests the Iranian leadership's approach is represented by... long-jailed Saudi-trained Jamaican-born nutjob Abdullah al-Faisal, as heard on Channel 4's dusty cassette calling for the murder of Jews and – oh yes – Indians.

Yours sick of this, well, drivel,
TIM WILKINSON,
Via email.

No country for old women

Sir,

So Dennis Nilsen is the UK's "...biggest (in terms of victims) serial killer" (Letters, 1214). Presumably then, when it comes to the less important elderly, we are following the supermarket trend of discounting near the sell-by date, or perhaps it is a multi-buy "kill one, get 14 free". If not, then in my mind, our biggest (in terms of victims) serial killer is Harold Shipman.

CHARLIE MARKWICK,
Gloucester.

Five portions a day

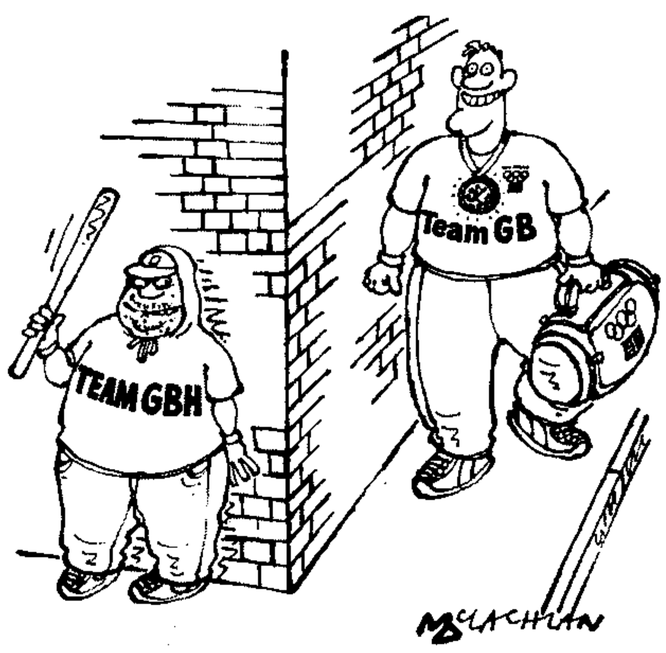
Sir,

Twice now in the past year you have used a word having a meaning with which I was unfamiliar, ie "fruity". This time (Eye 1216) you used it to describe David Cameron's wife and last year to describe the co-host of the new 'News at Ten'. (The women in question were Samantha Cameron and Julie Etchingham respectively, neither of whom you actually named at the time.)

I can conclude from the context that it means an attractive woman, but can you cite such a use in any organ other than your own or am I the proverbial Martian?

(I realise Liberace won a libel case back in the 1950s when a tabloid said he was fruity. But **there** *"fruity" meant gay)...*

FRANK DESMOND,
Cork, ROI.



Olympicballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Phelps has literally blown them all out of the water."
GABBY LOGAN, BBC1
(Graham Whyte)

"...the opening ceremony will take place in one of the world's unique stadiums."
BBC Radio 4 News
(P.J. Walter)

"The Birds Nest Stadium, at this moment in time, is right in front of me"
DARREN CAMPBELL, BBC Radio 5 Live
(Mick Tully)

"The only reason I won't finish the marathon is if my leg doesn't handle it"
PAULA RADCLIFFE, Radio 4
(Eamon McAllister)

"She won by miles: seven one hundred thousandths of a second."
Reporter, BBC1
(Mark Roelofsen)

"It's the leading man who leads the way"
SUE BARKER, BBC1
(Daniel Edward)

"There goes the arrow, winging its way down like a fish"
Eddie Butler, BBC
(Simon P. Smith)

Oral tradition

Sir,

Remote Controller (Eye 1215) objects to those bio-dramas that he says are just "another impersonation of a dead comedian who didn't want his audience to know about the blowjobs from rent boys".

However, journalist Mavis Nicholson once asked the late Kenneth Williams, in a TV interview, whether he would object to the posthumous publishing of his diaries. Not only did he not object, he seemed to positively relish the idea. They duly were, in the 1990s. And the recent Williams BBC drama, blowjobs and all, was based on those diaries.

HARRY FOX,
Via email.

Pedantry Corner

I'm confused by the advertisement of Ex-Presenter Loans (Eye 1216). It ends "So don't consonant consonant vowel consonant with us, or else." Shouldn't this be "consonant vowel consonant consonant"?

If there's something I've overlooked, please tell; I'd hate to be missing a swear word from my repertoire...

DAVID ASHBRIDGE.

Sir,

Dick Lyall (Letters, 1216) asks if he is alone in remembering "J. Peasmould Grunthputtock" from 'Round the Horne'. He is. The character – who was the world's dirtiest dirty old man, and King of Peasemoldia, just off the Balls Pond Road – was called, and spelt, "J. Peasemold Gruntfuttock"...

TOM CUTLER.

Re: "Gordon Brown following Labour's unprecedented defeat in Henley, 27 June" (HP Sauce, Eye 1216). I expect the first Labour candidate to stand in Henley was defeated, thus setting a precedent for all the defeats of subsequent Labour candidates through to those defeated by Michael Heseltine and Boris Johnson...

NEIL BONNAUD.

Re: Eye 1216's citation of Francis Wheen (Is that his name? – never heard of him.)

Your translation of, presumably, "enough of Wheen" as "satis Wheeni" is surely somewhat Churchillian. "Wheeni" must be "of Wheen" genitive while this "of" is "about", not possessive. Surely ablative or maybe dative. Either way, "satis Wheeno". Write out 100 times...

ROD TRANCHANT.

Some golfing pedantry: Padraig Harrington **defended** *his Open title by turning up to play. He defended it* **successfully** *by winning it.*

Since his participation had been in doubt due to an injured wrist, the comment that he "never thought he could defend his title, let alone win it", is both grammatically accurate and fully unworthy of its entry in Colemanballs (Eye 1216)...

DAVE LODWIG.

In response to Stephen Nashet (Eye 1215), I feel duty bound as a maths teacher to highlight an error that pupils make all the time. The original surd $2\sqrt{3}+5$ is perfectly correct, if inelegant (a "prettier" version would be $5+2\sqrt{3}$).

The answer of $4\sqrt{2}$ would only be possible if brackets had been introduced or the root symbol elongated like so: $2\sqrt{3+5}$. I won't bore you with the working out to reach the answer, I'm sure there must be an A-level Maths or even A GCSE veteran who can help you.*

You can't get more pedantic than a mathematician!

Keep up the good work,
BENJAMIN DI LEO.

Letter from **Accra**

from Our Own Correspondent

ONCE richer than Malaysia, then poorer than everywhere, for 20 years Ghana has been steadily on the up. We've kicked out the military, had elections, even a change of government, and recorded decent economic growth. But now the shining star of West Africa again stands at the cross-roads.

Last year we discovered we were sitting on a billion barrels of oil – the collective equivalent of each of us winning the lottery. Will our leaders benefit from our late-arrived good fortune and wisely invest in a future built on strong infrastructure and the common good? Or will we go the way of neighbouring Nigeria, where a tiny, self-perpetuating elite lords it over a nation racked by poverty, decay and corruption?

The signs aren't encouraging. Our Oxford-educated president, John Kufuor, is scheduled to stand down in January after two terms in office. But this month he took off on a mission to find out how his successor should spend the oil money with a visit to… Trinidad. He left behind a small scandal over his decision to sell the state telephone company to Vodafone, just in time for the ruling party's election campaign, along with spiraling food, water and power prices.

Cynics here smiled when Trinidad's prime minister Patrick Manning referred to Kufuor as the "Capo di tutti capo" of African leaders. Of course, our president is in no way responsible for the flood of cocaine in the streets of Accra or Kumasi, nor for the stream of elegantly dressed South Americans now paying well over the odds for our prime real estate.

Nor indeed is his younger brother, the entrepreneurially-inclined "Uncle" George Kufuor, or the inspector-general of police, Patrick Kwarteng Acheampong – although elements of our gutter press meanly persist in reporting how some of our Colombian investors have been seen driving in cars owned by the two gentlemen. No less a person than the chief justice, Georgina Wood, cleared Acheampong of any wrongdoing when two tonnes of cocaine "disappeared" from police custody a couple of years ago; she concluded that at worst the inspector-general had been guilty of an "inappropriate choice of friends".

Former intelligence minister Francis Poku took a more robust view. In January he presented Kufuor with a dossier on the apparent subborning of our police, judiciary and politicians by international cocaine traffickers. Poku was swiftly sacked and placed under police surveillance until he fled the country.

A fundamentally generous spirit, Kufuor rarely holds grudges for long. That's why he decided to spend $1.5m on gold medals for some eminent Ghanaians, including himself. Sadly, several of the intended recipients – oppositionists such as former president Jerry Rawlings, his vice president John Atta Mills and security adviser Captain Kojo Tsikata – have declined the new national honour. As rival parties stand poised to contest for power ahead of the looming oil bonanza, they complain that Kufuor is moving to undermine the already fragile independence of the judiciary, key to any prospect of avoiding a Nigerian-style catastrophe.

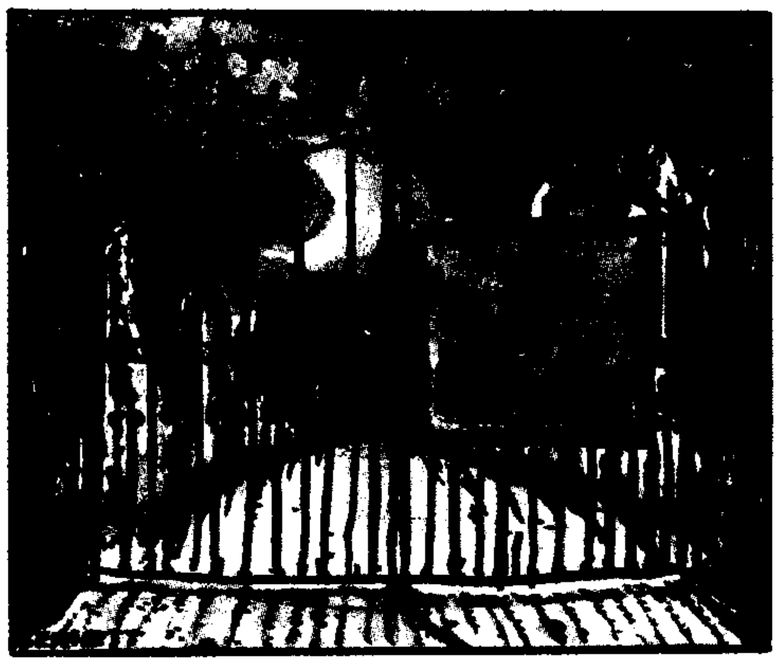
The elder statesmen of the opposition are angry about the jailing of Tsatsu Tsikata, their former colleague and ex-chief executive of the state oil company, by Justice Henrietta Abban, another loyal friend of the president. Tsikata was tried for breaking a law that hadn't been enacted when the claimed offence was committed, but the judge had no time for such technicalities. The case had become an albatross around her neck, she lamented. Although she wasn't able to make the judgment available to the defence, Justice Abban shouted to the court that "Judgment day is here" and sent Tsikata to the cells for five years. And if Tsikata quarrels with the verdict, he can always appeal to the supreme court, which, like the high court, is full of loyal friends of our gentle president.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "Lower court judges may have ruled that necrophilia is legal in Wisconsin," Justice Patience Roggensack told reporters in Madison, "but the Supreme Court is overruling their decision. By 5 votes to 2, we find that Wisconsin state law bans sexual intercourse with anyone who does not give consent, and this applies whether the victim is alive or dead at the time. Dead people obviously cannot give consent, so a reasonably well-informed person should understand that the law prohibits sexual intercourse with a dead body."

The Supreme Court made its ruling after lower court judges had decided in 2006 that necrophilia was not a criminal offence in Wisconsin, and dismissed charges brought against three men who had dug up a corpse for



sexual purposes (see Eye 1171). However, public defender Jefren Olsen said the Supreme Court's majority opinion was wrong. "Necrophilia is heinous conduct, but that doesn't make it illegal. The law in question was only intended to apply to rape-murder cases where the victim was alive at the time of the rape, and that was not the case here. That's the conclusion reached by lower court judges, and they are 'reasonably well-informed people' too."

Sexual assault charges have now been reinstated against the three men. The decision brings Wisconsin in line with 20 other US states that prohibit necrophilia. It is, apparently, still legal in the 30 other US states. *(Star Tribune [Minneapolis], 10/7/08. Spotter: Peter Owen)*

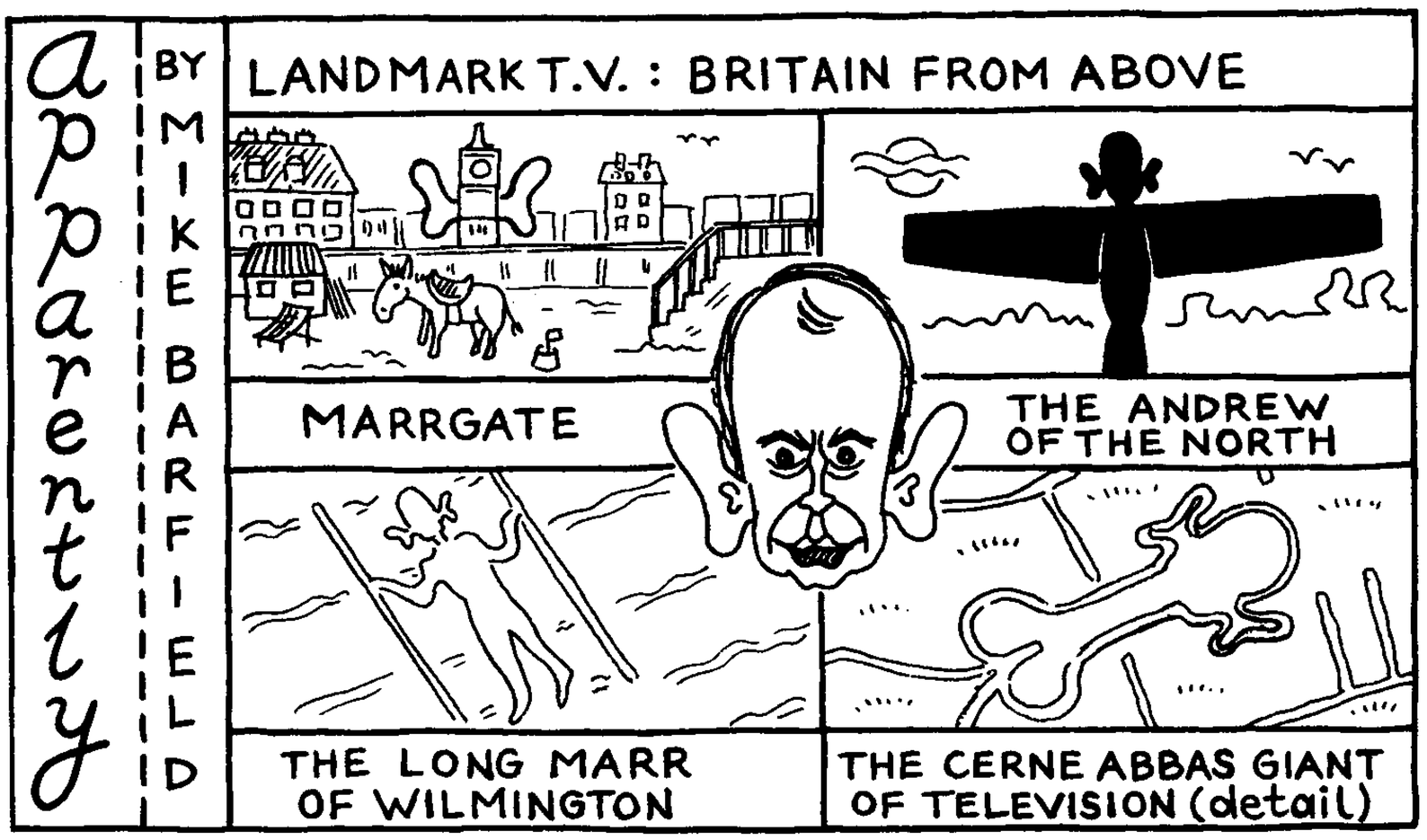
● *"Ian Noll was jobless, penniless, and depressed," solicitor Lawrence Jones told Newport Crown Court, "so he decided to take his own life. He borrowed his brother's car without permission, rigged up a gas canister to it, and drove to a beauty spot near Merthyr Tydfil, where he planned to gas himself. However, after winding up the windows and opening the valve on the gas canister, he switched on the car radio, listened to 'Que Sera Sera' sung by Doris Day, and decided that life was worth living after all. To celebrate his change of heart, he lit a cigarette. That was when the car burst into flames, exploding so loudly that people from the local rugby club heard the bang. They rushed to his assistance, and he was taken to hospital, where he was treated for severe burns."*

Noll admitted arson, and was given a twelve-month community service order. Passing sentence, the judge remarked "I accept that you did not intend to blow yourself or the car up, and I am assured that you will not try to do it again. But for your own good, I am ordering you to complete an enhanced thinking skills course. And your licence is endorsed for taking a vehicle without consent." (Western Mail, 1/7/08. Spotter: Derek Bishop)

– ● –

● "Until recently, the city lost very few sewer grates," city manager Marco Lalonde told a press conference in Ottawa, "and those that vanished were invariably the work of pranksters. They'd just lift them up and drop them into the catch basin, where we could easily recover them. It was a nuisance, but nothing more. But a month ago, we started getting reports that grates were disappearing altogether, and since then we've lost over 150. We don't know who's doing it, but we think they're being stolen for profit, because of the increase in scrap metal prices. We don't have enough spares to replace them all, so we're asking cyclists and pedestrians to keep their eyes open, because they could seriously injure themselves by falling into an open sewer."

Constable Boucher of the Ottawa Police added that "the rise in commodity prices is making scrap metal crimes like this highly profitable, especially if copper or brass is involved. In Nova Scotia recently, thieves stole all the copper wiring from the lighting systems of three baseball fields in Halifax, and metal crosses have started to disappear from the graves of war veterans. We don't yet have a special section that looks after sewer grates, but perhaps we need one." *(East Ottawa Weekly Journal, 3/7/08, and CBC News, 3/7/08. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*


Apparently
BY MIKE BARFIELD
LANDMARK T.V. : BRITAIN FROM ABOVE
MARRGATE
THE ANDREW OF THE NORTH
THE LONG MARR OF WILMINGTON
THE CERNE ABBAS GIANT OF TELEVISION (detail)

RUSSIA PASSES OFF FAKE TO THE WORLD

Mime artist

Actual dictator

RUSSIA has confirmed that the elected president who was seen ordering Russian troops into Georgia was in fact miming to the voice of a man with an ugly reputation.

"It was felt by the invasion organising commitee that he presented a more attractive democratic image of Russia to show the world at a time when the West was wondering what the real man in charge was up to", said a Kremlin spokesman.

However, the spokesman denied that fireworks seen lighting up the Georgian skyline were pre-recorded, digitally-enhanced images inserted into TV footage that was beamed around the world. "No, the bombs falling on civilian areas were genuine", he confirmed.

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Billy Cotton Jnr

So. Farewell
Then Billy
Cotton.

Famous BBC
Executive.

You were the
Son of bandleader
Billy Cotton.

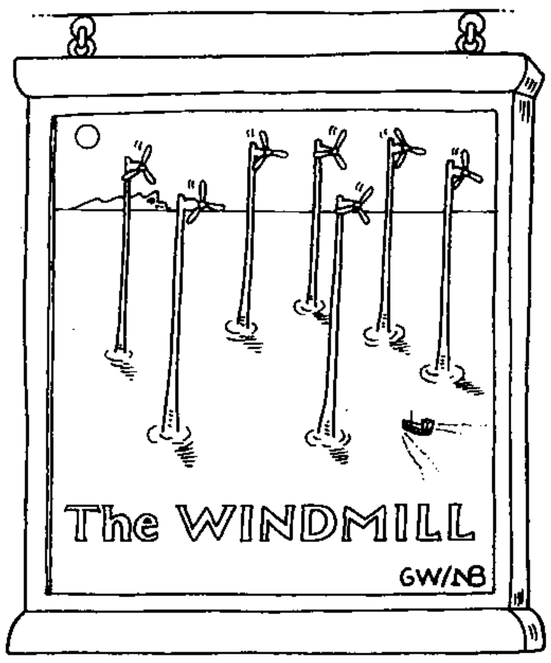
"Wakey!
Wakey!"

That was
His catchphrase.

But this
Will not
Apply to you.

E.J. Thribb Jnr (17)

MODERN INN SIGNS



ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

JEREMY CLARKSON

May I ask you if you've got a favourite spoon?

Let's face it. All British spoons are crap. I've got one here. For a start, it looks cheap. And it is cheap. And it'll fall to bits before you know where you are. Useless. Absolutely useless.

So what would you have as a quality spoon?

I know it's pricey at £180,000, but the new Bismarck soup spoon has got quality written all over it. Every bit is handcrafted by German spoon engineers and, believe you me, those boys may be Germans, but they know a thing or two about soup spoons. I suppose I am getting paid for this...

But couldn't they be dangerous in the wrong hands of an inexperienced soup eater?

Are you a lesbian or something? Or do you work for the Health and Safety brigade? If you're trying to catch me out, you've got the wrong man, sweetheart.

Are you always on the lookout for a new spoon or do you feel you've got enough already?

With computer technology, spoonmakers can do incredible things these days. It won't be long before you'll have a spoon that can stir a cup of tea in 0.2 seconds. It's just a matter of time.

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

Can I have the money now? Preferably in cash.

NEXT WEEK: *Amy Winehouse – Me and My Wine House.*

Nursery Times

Friday, 22 August, 2008

'THE FATHER I NEVER KNEW'

Jemima Puddleduck Tells Her Unique Story

FOR the first time ever, heiress Jemima Puddleduck, formerly married to Imran Fox, has spoken of her controversial man-eating father Sir Jaws Goldfinger.

In an exclusive interview, she told Nursery Times staff reporter Enid Blyton, "Many people just think of my father as a greedy, man-eating shark, biting people's legs off without any sympathy for the victim.

"It may be true that he did savage lots of innocent Toy Towners, but he never lost sight of the fact that he was a shark. And his father had been a shark before him. The family tradition of tearing people's limbs off meant a lot to him.

Pictured with her father

"He felt it deeply when public opinion in Toy Town turned against him. In the end, he wanted no more to do with them and swam off to Mexico."

And what of Jemima herself? "I'm a lot like my father. You might call me a free spirit. But I often feel that it's in me to bite someone's leg off. But it's difficult, being a duck."

MILIBAND MAKES AN ANNOUNCEMENT

GEORGIA CRISIS

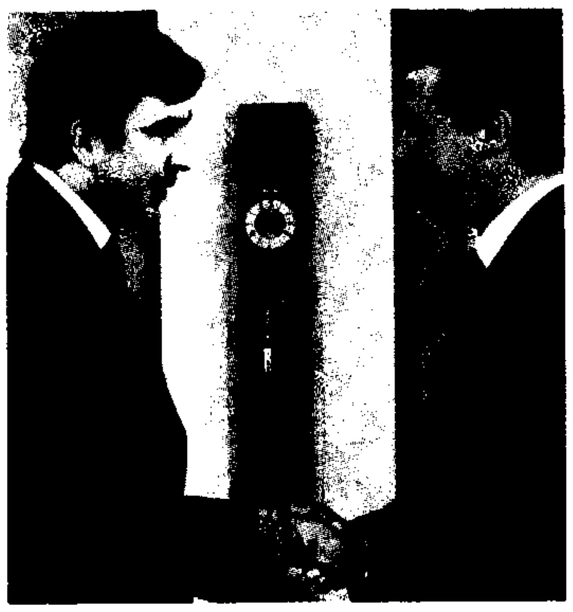
CAMERON FLIES IN

by Our Man in Tbilisi
Russian Twisk

TORY leader David Cameron flew into Tbilisi yesterday bringing a message of hope to this beleaguered nation.

Huge crowds (Sydov and Borisa Bonkashvili) greeted the Conservative leader with bouquets of potatoes and cabbages as he stepped onto Georgian soil.

Speaking to a massed rally of three British journalists Cameron said: "I pledge my support to President Saakashvili in everything he is doing and I am sure I would do the same if I was in his shoes."



The Cameron is Coming

Last night in Moscow Russian President Dmitri Medvedev was said to be shaken by Mr Cameron's outspoken criticism.

"I have never heard of him," he told reporters.

■ **Leader Comment p. 94.**

The Youth of Britain
An Apology

IN COMMON with other papers, we may have given the impression in recent reports that we regarded the nation's youth as obese, lazy and obsessed with binge-drinking.

Headlines such as "Our Fat Kids Can't Even Walk" and "The On The Binge 24/7 Girls" may have led readers to conclude that the nation's youth was in a state of crisis and that we were breeding a generation of drink-sodden no hopers.

In the light of recent events in Beijing, we are happy to accept that there was not a jot or scintilla of truth in any of the above articles.

Headlines such as "Britain's Golden Girls and Boys" and "Super-Fit Brits Beat the World" will go some way, we trust, to reassure readers that our earlier reports were ill-founded and inappropriate.

We apologise unreservably for any offence we may have caused.

© All newspapers

In Today's Eye2

LIVING

● STAIRLIFT TO THE STARS

Eye2's expert **Rosie Rusbridger** tests the new Stannah Speedster

HEALTH

● BEETROOT

Is it nature's answer to sciatica? **Dr Stephen Thrush** on the trail of an overlooked vegetable that could alter the lives of millions of sciatica sufferers

GOING PLACES

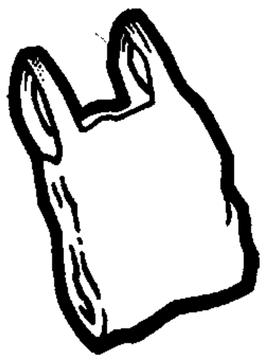
● THE UNDISCOVERED HULL

Bevis Stoddy finds there's more to Hull than just a newly-promoted football team

LIFESTYLE

● YAK YAK

Former hedge-fund dynamo **Derek Prune** and his partner ex-PR **Dotti Mckay** followed the trail to Nepal. Now they produce authentic yoghurt made from yak's milk – and it's now available in Harrods!

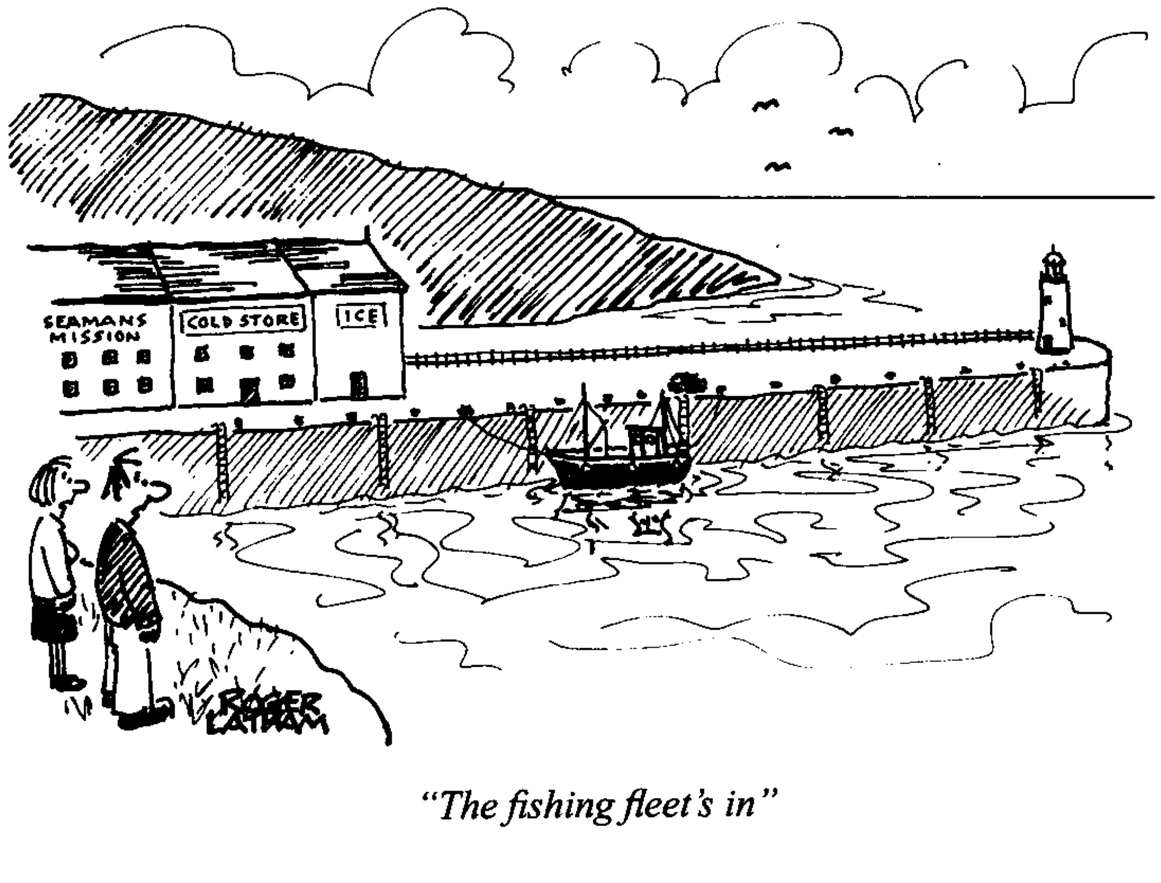


COLLECTING

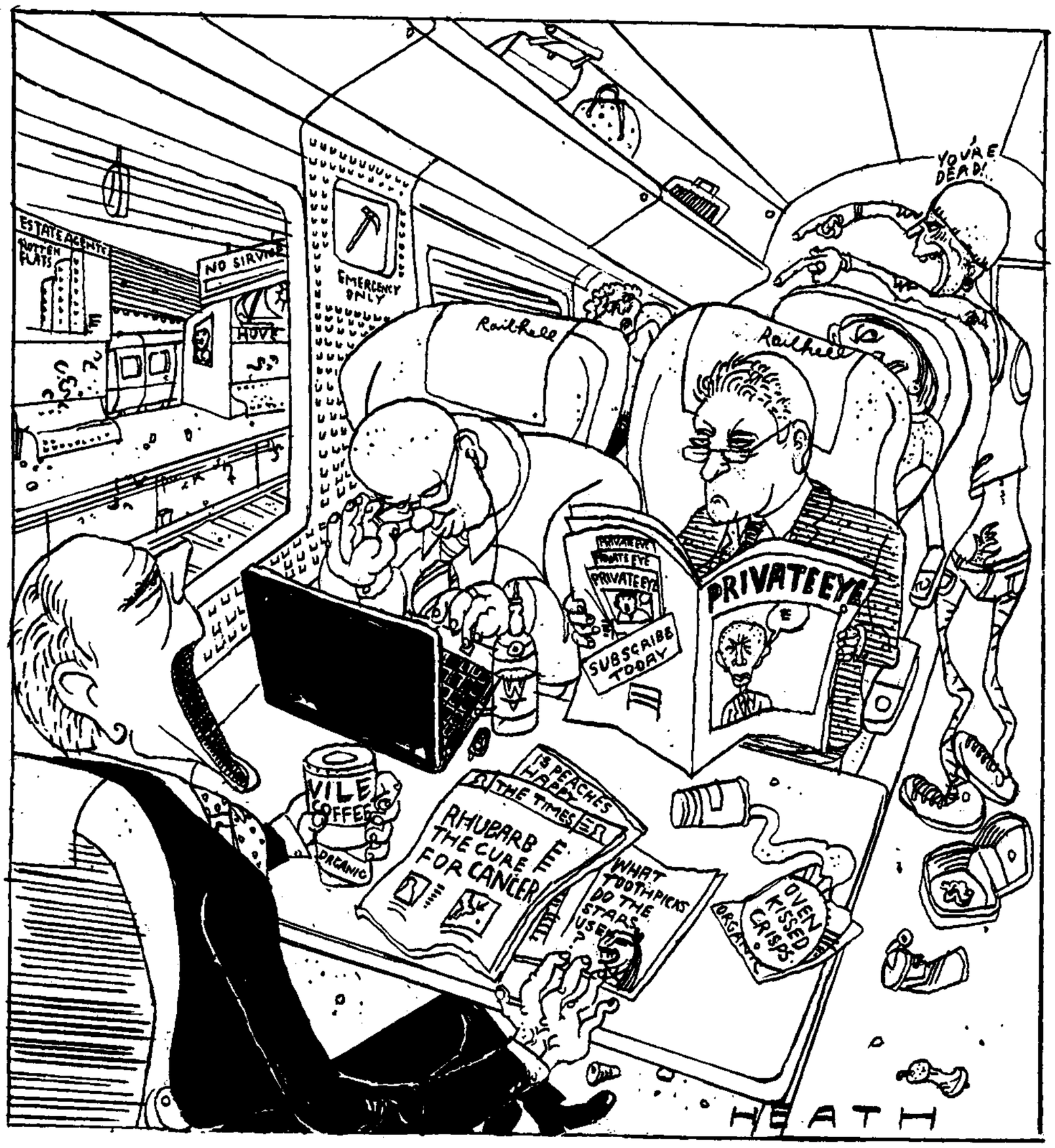
● BAG IT!

Think twice before you throw away that plastic shopping bag. **Hugo Hughes-Onslow** last month saw an M&S bag from 1987 fetch £1500 at Sotheby's.

All in Eye2
It's Where It's At!



"The fishing fleet's in"



Great Bores of Today

"Yes I used to read it in the old days when Peter Cook was the editor but if you ask me it went downhill when they got rid of that Bores of Today feature they used to do you're too young to remember it but every week they'd have some bloke banging on about something that really interested him I remember they did one once about this couple who'd just had double glazing put in and there was another one about a man who was done for speeding the drawings were brilliant as well all the detail that went into them Gerald Scarfe used to do them first thing I turned to"

Life stEYEle

EDINBURGH FESTIVAL

Six Must-Sees

The All-Male National Ballet of Uzbekistan perform Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite to balalaika and song accompaniment
***Venue 46725**. McHackey's Temperance Hall. Seats 27*

An Evening with Betty Kellogg Making a welcome return to Edinburgh, black, gay US icon Betty Kellogg tackles hot issues from child obesity to what duvet to buy.
***Venue 67923**. Lunchtime at Mooney's Vegan Rendezvous, 11-12pm.*

Hurricane
New play by award-winning Walter Schott based on the real life drama of BBC weatherman Michael Fish facing the biggest crisis of his life – his failure to warn Britain of the 1987 hurricane. Starring former *Likely Lad* Rodney Bewes as Fish.
***Venue 84861**. James Robertson Justice Memorial Theatre, Princes Street, Mon-Fri.*

Bewes as Fish

Work in Progress
Daring theatrical experiment created by Quebec-based Theatre du Monde. No actors. No script. The audience must fill up the six hours themselves.
***Venue 89437**. The Old Railway Shed, Waverley Station* (That's enough Fringe, Ed.)

From The Message Boards

Members of the online community respond to the major issues of the day...

London Olympics will rise to Beijing's challenge says minister

So Tessa Jowell promises something "just as wonderful and extraordinary" in 2012. If Labour's "world class" New Britain is anything to go by, then God help us. So far we've had "urban dance" troupes and "rap" performers in the Olympic campaign. I heard one wag say that the opening ceremony will involve 10,000 Asbo yobs (in the orange punishment uniforms proposed by Her Majesty's "Government") discarding sparkling foil takeaway containers into the headlight beams of the massed vehicles of the Metropolitan "Police". Many a true word spoken in jest, I fear. – ***Gerard***

I heard something amusing along those lines on one of the Radio 4 comedy programmes. I forget the details, but it was terribly clever. – ***Jeremy***

Can we compete? Of course not, and we shouldn't try. And that goes for the events as well as the organising – ***Cyril the cynic***

bild a big gippsy camp like the 1 out-side Tessa Jowls house!! lol ☺
– ***Hunny_pot***

When the games (PC "proper" ganda) is over put the scum in the stadium and shoot them like in Chile – ***No_Justice_UK***

Browns just got a personel train-er so he'el win the gold for BOTTLE-ing! (he wud win it anyway but I said it this way to be satiricle) – ***Prima_Donut***

The Olympics are all about individuals giving of their best. My memories will be of Nicole Cooke's lovely smile in the rain, and the sadness of the New Zealander who fell off in the equestrian three day event. I'll never forget the look of disappointment on the poor horse's face. – ***Emily***

British medel winner's = nation-el disgrace ● NOT 1 of them dedercated there medel's to Maddie – ***Justice_4_Maddie***

It puts everything in prospective - a medal or a child's life – ***Rot_in_hell_Myra***

idiot's showing off with there meddle's!! some of them finish-ed 3rd!! ● LOSER'S!!!●● – ***Broken_Britan***

i hope all there kid's die then may-be they will "THINK" next time they win – ***Eye_4_an_eye***

Posties shun Booze

So the Royal Mail has decided to cease deliveries to the Yorkshire village of Booze because of concerns about "elf'n'safety" (does anyone else read Littlejohns – he's marvellous). The hill is too steep, apparently. As if that wasn't bad enough, the village, despite its name, has no pub. Only in Brown's Britain. – ***Brown_out***

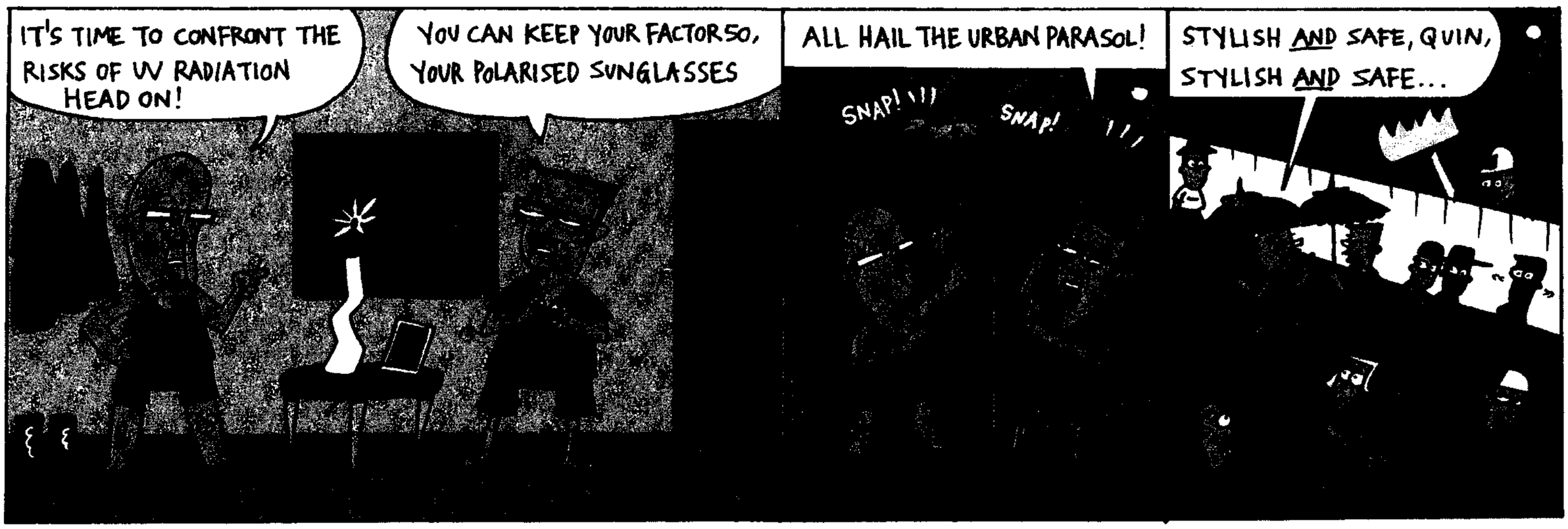
Celeb

LIGGER

I HEAR RONNIE WOOD HAS GOT HIMSELF IN A PICKLE AGAIN, GARY.
YEAH
WHAT MAKES A MAN IN HIS SIXTIES THINK IT'S A SENSIBLE IDEA TO RUN OFF WITH A 20-YEAR-OLD RUSSIAN BLONDE, EH?
SHRUG
DEAR OLD RONNIE WOOD.
I WOULD TOO, MATE. WE ALL WOULD.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER


IT'S TIME TO CONFRONT THE RISKS OF UV RADIATION HEAD ON!
YOU CAN KEEP YOUR FACTOR 50, YOUR POLARISED SUNGLASSES
ALL HAIL THE URBAN PARASOL!
SNAP!!!
SNAP!!!
STYLISH AND SAFE, QUIN, STYLISH AND SAFE...

THE BROON-ITES
THE LAUGH-A-MINUTE LADS AND LASSIES LOBBYING FOR LEADERSHIP!
Fountain and Jamieson
RECEPTION
SEAVIEW HOTEL GUEST ROOM
AH TELL YE ANGUS, THIS NEW 'CLUEDO' IS A LOAD O' BOAK. WHIT'S SO MODERN ABOOT IT?
THIT'S WHIT AH'D LIKE TAE KEN...
CLUEDO
WELL MORAG, IT'S VERRA MODERN. YE'VE GOT MISS SCARLET THE MOVIE STAR - SHE'S A SUSPECT...
AYE, VERRA MODERN.
...MRS WHITE, THE ACTRESS - WHO'S A SUSPECT AND MR PLUM THE COMPUTER BILLIONAIRE - WHO'S A SUSPECT...
AYE SO WHIT, BUT WHIT'S SO UP-TAE-DATE ABOOT THE VICTIM?
SEAVIEW HOTEL
IT'S MR BROON, THE POLITICIAN!
CAFE
FISH AND CHIPS
JINGS, CRIVVENS AND HIDE MA SELF!
ZOOM!
HENRY DAVIES

"Isn't your campaign against excessive packaging a little excessive?"

ARE 'A' LEVEL ATTACKS NOW FAR TOO EASY?

by **Ivan O'Level**

EVERY year around this time, my editor phones me up asking for a 2,000 word-article bemoaning the fact that A-level results are getting better and better.

But as I cut and paste the current ridiculous pass-rate figures into the exact same article I wrote last year, I wonder: is it now far too easy to attack A-levels? Can almost anyone do it and get a piece published in the newspapers? Are the pieces all now meaningless? Certainly when I was at school it was much harder to earn a big fat cheque by *(cont. p94)*.

THAT MERVYN KING QUARTERLY INFLATION REPORT IN FULL

Upbeat

1. We're doomed.
2. All doomed.
3. Er... Did I mention we're doomed?
4. Then we're going to die.
5. Er...
6. That's it.

LATE NEWS
GORDON BROWN TO WRITE BOOK

GORDON BROWN'S publisher has confirmed that the Prime Minister is to write a new book on what it means to be shit-ish.

"Everyone who knows Gordon knows that being 'shit-ish' is something he is passionate about," said a spokesman. "In fact, he knows so much about being shit-ish that for once he will be able to write this book himself without the help of a ghost writer."

MADDIE STORIES New Sightings

By Our Man in Portugal by **R. Guido**

THERE have been reports of several new sightings of Maddie stories during the last few weeks.

They have been spotted in a variety of different places giving hope to the idea that the story is not dead.

No shock

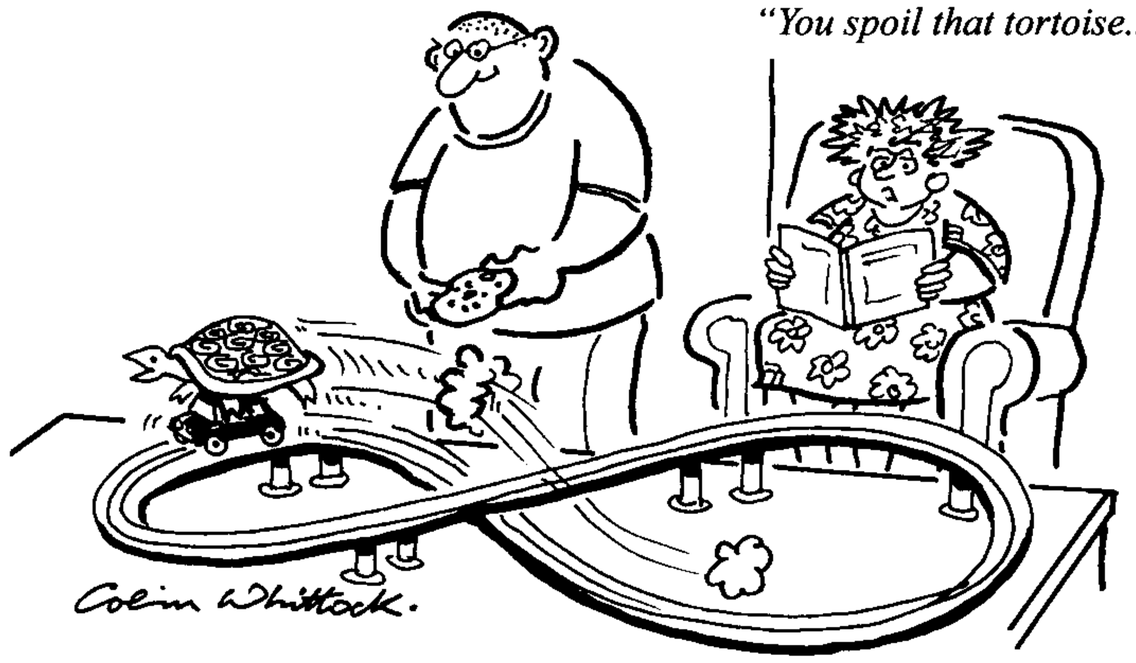
Said one witness, "I saw it quite clearly on the front page of the Daily Telegraph. There was no mistaking it. It couldn't have been any other story".

And the Maddie sightings are not confined to the UK. A reader in New Dworkin, USA, claims that he too saw what was definitely an item about the missing toddler. "I only glimpsed it for a second", he said "but I'll swear it was genuine".

Full story p.94

● ***Have you been affected by any of the issues raised by this report? We don't want to hear from you, if you have.***

"You spoil that tortoise..."



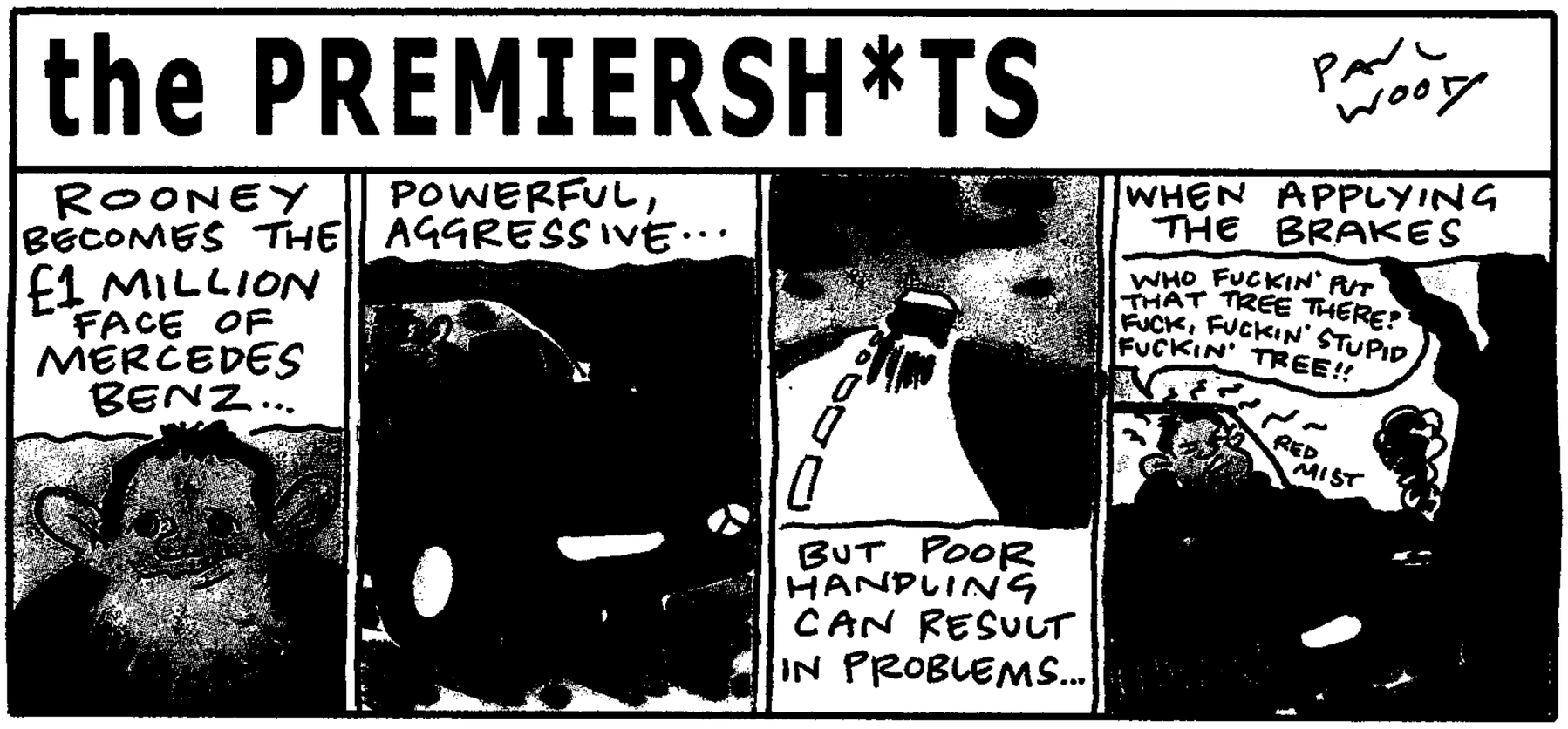
A WOMAN accidentally stabbed herself in the foot with a 36in sword while performing a pagan good luck ritual in a cemetery at night.

Ravenshead Messenger

BooksFirst

Buy *Girls of Tender Age* for £6.79 (free p&p) at **timesonline.co.uk/booksfirst**

The Times


the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOOD
ROONEY BECOMES THE £1 MILLION FACE OF MERCEDES BENZ...
POWERFUL, AGGRESSIVE...
BUT POOR HANDLING CAN RESULT IN PROBLEMS...
WHEN APPLYING THE BRAKES
WHO FUCKIN' PUT THAT TREE THERE? FUCK, FUCKIN' STUPID FUCKIN' TREE!!
RED MIST

GLENDA SLAGG

FLEET STREET'S BEIJING BABE

■ **PRINCE CHARLES!!?! What a berk!!? (No offence, your Majesty!?) First it was carbuncles! Now his Royal Nuttiness has the nerve to tell us not to eat genetically modified cornflakes!??! I grant you the Prince may know the correct uniform to wear at the Henley Regatta or wherever!?!! But a scientist, he ain't!!?! When it comes to feeding the world, leave it to the boffins, Charley-boy!!?! (And if I want to know what seeds to plant I'll ask down the garden centre. OK??!!**

■ HATS OFF to Bonny Prince Charley!!?? OK, so he looks a bit of a nutter in his kilt!??. But it's high time somebody with a bit of clout told these Frankenstein farmers to call it a day!?! Sure – half the world is hungry!!?! But do they want to eat tomatoes tasting of fishpaste??!! Carry on, Charlie!!? And maybe – just maybe – the message might sink in!!! Geddit!!?!

■ **BARACK OBAMA!!?! What's so special about him, I'd like to know?!? The way some people talk him up, you'd think he was John F Kennedy and Jesus Christ all rolled into one!??! But hey!! Let's talk a bit of sense here, big boy!!? Just ask yourself, what's he ever done?? And he's not even the President!!? So calm down, everyone!!! Geddit??**

■ BARACK OBAMA!! What a star!?! I say this dishy Democrat from Dakota with his beaming smile and happy handshake is like John F Kennedy and Jesus Christ all rolled into one!!! No wonder they are calling him the President already!!?! So move over, Dubya!! And make room for a REAL president!!?! Mmmmm!!!?!

■ **HERE they are – Glenda's Gorgeous Gold Medallists:**

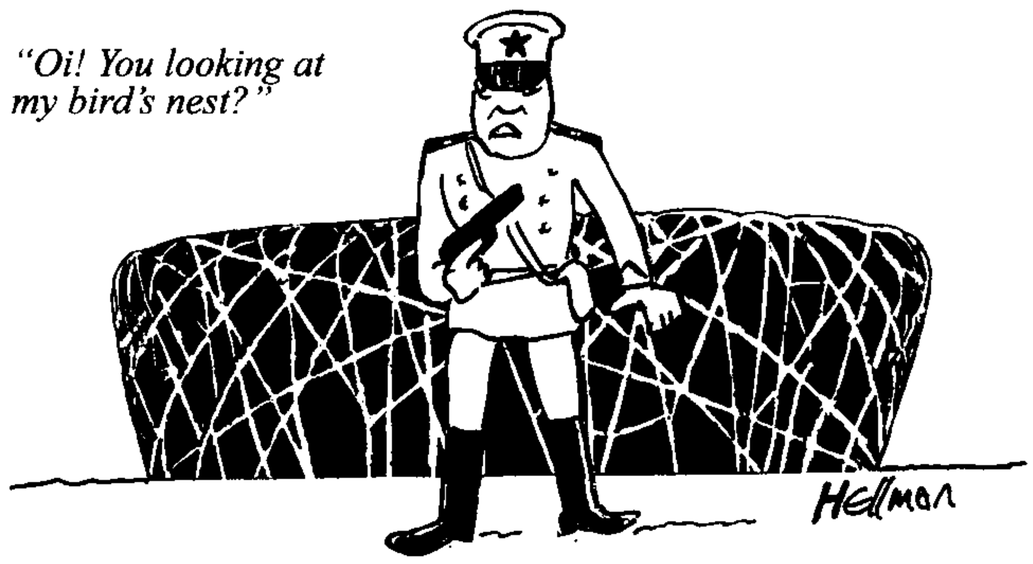
● **David Tennant**!!?! Who?!! He's the new Hamlet, stoopid??!! To bonk or not to bonk?!! Geddit??!!

● **Kevin Pietersen**!!?! England's new cricket skipper!?! I'm just BATTY about young Kev!!? Geddit?!?

● **Mikheil Saakashvili**!!?! Crazy name!!? Crazy Georgian!!?

Byeeee!!!

"Oi! You looking at my bird's nest?"



Daily Mail
FRIDAY, AUGUST 22, 2008

FURY AT 'GUILTY' STAGG PAY-OUT

by Mail Crime Staff
Ben Schottgun

FURY erupted last night at the news that loner Colin Stagg, nearly found guilty of the murder of Rachel Nickell on Wimbledon Common is to receive compensation of £706,000.

Stagg, known to have a book about the occult and a number of dangerous knives, including a breadknife and the knife he used to butter his toast, was lucky to be freed as the result of a "legal blunder".

Gordon Honeytrap

Last night leading backbench Tory Simon Moffett expressed outrage when we contacted him at his holiday home in Crete.

"Why are you ringing me at eight o'clock in the morning?" he fumed. "I'm on holiday with my wife and kids."

LEADER, p.94.

Murderous weirdo

Fly tippers, litter louts and dogs who allow owners to foul paths and pavements will be top of the list.

North Wales Chronicle

"We're aiming to increase our diversity quotient"

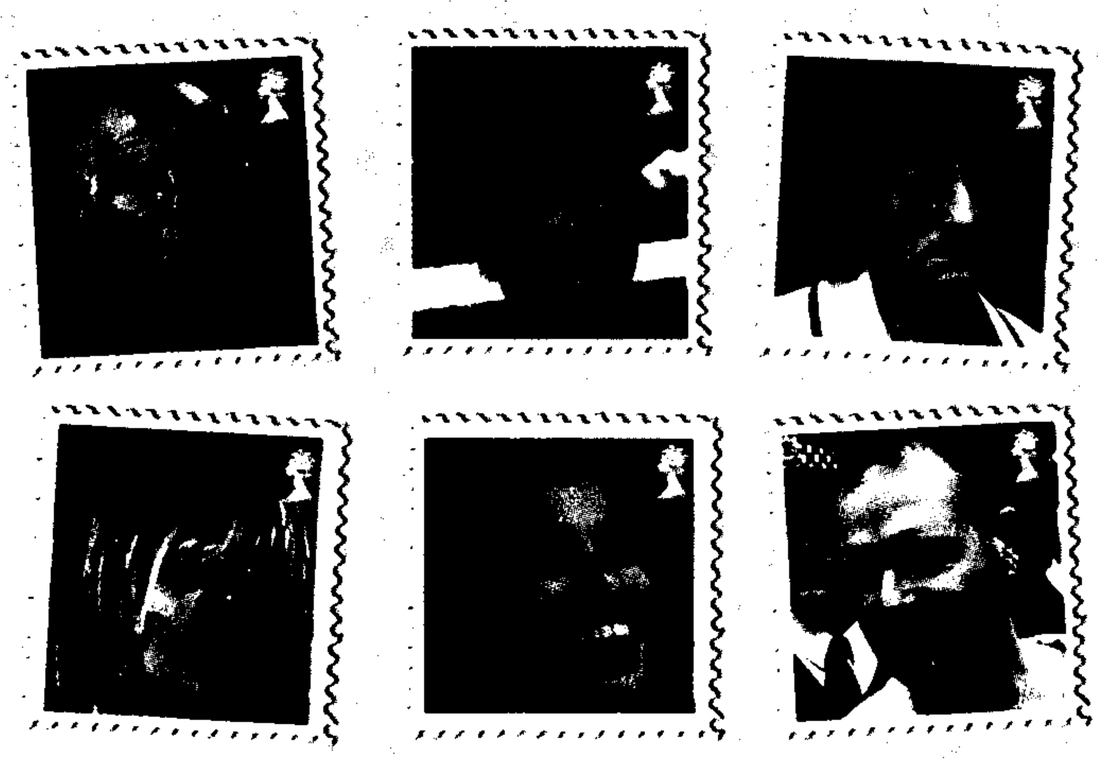
"Living in a converted chapel might seem a bit spooky, but it has its perks"

Advertisement

To Commemorate

Royal Mail

BRITAIN'S TROUBLED STARS



When it comes to celebrities undergoing personal crises involving relationships, drug addiction and alcoholism, Britain leads the world.

Now Royal Mail launches a set of commemorative stamps featuring six of the nation's best-loved troubled stars. They are:

- **Michael Barrymore**
- **Pete Doherty**
- **Ronnie Wood**
- **Kate Moss**
- **Amy Winehouse**
- **Paul "Gazza" Gascoigne**

Order your first day cover of this unique set of stamps now for a special offer of only £15.99 (+ postage). With every set of stamps purchased, Royal Mail will donate 1p to the Priory Rehabilitation Unit for Troubled Celebrities.

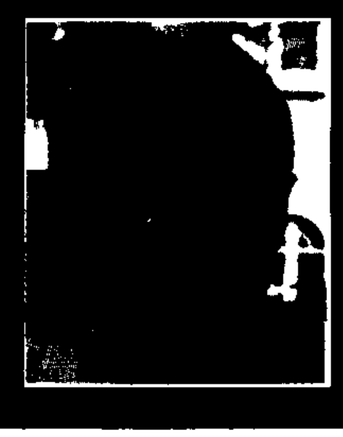
WEDDING OF THE CENTURY

How They Are Related

Cherry Blossom Shoe Polish
|
Delmonte's Tinned Peaches
|
Geldof the Wizard
|
Bob the Builder
|
Honeysuckle Rose
|
Rosehip Syrup
|
Peaches W.B. Yates

Maxwell House Instant Coffee
|
Robert Maxwell
|
Maxwell Hastings
|
Maxwell Gin Drummey
|
Bulldog Drummy
|
Max Wall
|
Rock Drummer

It's Your Line To Red Ken On LBC



Caller: Hullo, Ken. It's Shirley from Sheerness.

Ken: Hullo, Shirley. You're through to Red Ken. What's your point?

Shirley: What do you think about all this fighting in Georgia and the Russian invasion and that. I mean, is it World War 3, Ken?

Ken: If Boris thinks he's going to improve London's traffic flow by tinkering with the congestion charge, it'll only succeed in proving what I've said all along.

Shirley: What's that, Ken?

Ken: That he's not fitted to do the job. Have I made myself clear, Shirley?

Shirley: Thank you, Ken.

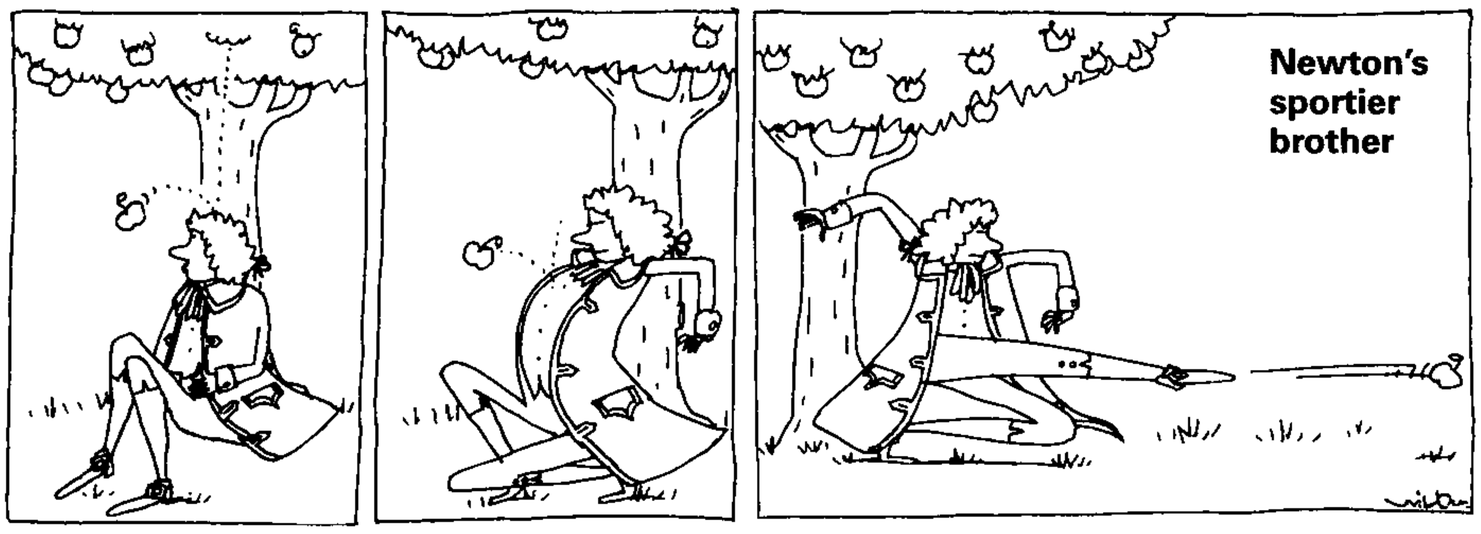
Ken: Next caller, please.

Caller: I'm Barry from Barnet, Ken. Have you been watching the Olympics, Ken? What did you make of that opening ceremony? Incredible, wasn't it?

Ken: You see the whole point of the congestion charge, Barry, was to reduce carbon emissions as well as easing the traffic flow. If Boris carries on the way he's going, London could be under water by 2012. So there you are, caller, they've got the wrong man to do the job. Next caller, please.

Caller: Hullo, Ken. It's Millie from Mill Hill. It's got to be the worst summer we've every had, wouldn't you agree? I had to turn the heating on last night it was so cold. I know what you're going to say, Ken. You're going to blame it on that Boris Johnson.

Ken: That's where you're wrong, caller. I'm going to blame it on that Boris Johnson. I warned Londoners *(cont. 94kHz)*



Sex Pistols swearing is most wanted clip

The Sex Pistols swearing live on air in a 1976 interview comes just ahead of Pamela Anderson *(right)* running along the beach in the American television show *Baywatch* in a top 10 of the most requested TV clips.

Daily Telegraph

DIARY

Polly Put the Kettle On

Polly put the kettle on,
Polly put the kettle on
Polly put the kettle on
Polly put the kettle on
Polly put the kettle on
Look here, Polly
How many more fucking times
Do I have to fucking tell you
To put that fucking kettle on?

The King's Breakfast

The King asked
The Queen, and
The Queen asked
The Dairymaid:
"Could we have some butter for
The Royal slice of bread?"
The Queen asked
The Dairymaid,
The Dairymaid
Said, "Fuck the fuck off
And don't
Ever
Fuck the fuck
With me
Again. I couldn't give a
Fucking fuck about
Your fucking slice of fucking
Bread."

Lines and Squares

Whenever I walk in a London street
I'm ever so careful to watch my feet
And I keep in the squares
And the masses of bears
Who wait at the corners all ready to eat
The sillies who tread on the lines of the street
Go back to their lairs,
And I say to them, "Stop
Treading on those fucking lines
This fucking minute or else
I'll push the shit back up your
Fucking arse, you fucking fuckfaces."

Looby Loo

Here we go looby loo
Here we go looby light
Here we go looby loo
Look here, looby fucking loo,
Who the fuck do you think you are?

THE HAROLD PINTER BOOK
OF NURSERY RHYMES

Frankly I've never heard such fucking nonsense.
I've just about had enough of this.
Get your coat, Lady Antonia
And let's fucking well fuck the fuck off.

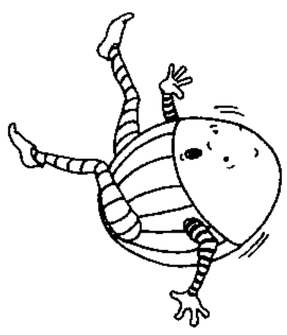
Dr Foster

Dr Foster
Went to Gloucester
In a shower of rain
He stepped in a puddle
Right up to his middle
And said, "Now I'm fucked, I'm
Well and truly fucked, and
You're fucked, They're fucked
We're all fucking fucked,
Lady Antonia, so best
Call a fucking cab."

Who killed Cock Robin?

Who killed Cock Robin?
I, said the Sparrow,
Because I'm a Yankee fucking
Imperialist
And I fuck anything that moves.

Humpty Dumpty



Humpty Dumpty
Sat on a wall
Humpty Dumpy
Had a great fall.
Serves you fucking right
For being an egg, chum.

Girls and Boys Come Out to Play

Girls and boys come out to play
The moon doth shine as bright as day
Leave your supper, and leave your sleep
And come with your playfellows into the street
Come with a whoop, come with a call,
Come with goodwill or not at all
In fact on second thoughts
I'd much prefer you didn't fucking come
I'm sick to fucking death of you and your
Fucking sort
Coming into our neighbourhood
And fucking the place up with your fucking
Whoops and your fucking calls
So why don't you
Just fuck the fuck off?

Hey Diddle Diddle

Hey diddle diddle
The cat and the fiddle
The cow jumped over the moon.
The little dog laughed
To see such sport
How fucking dare he?

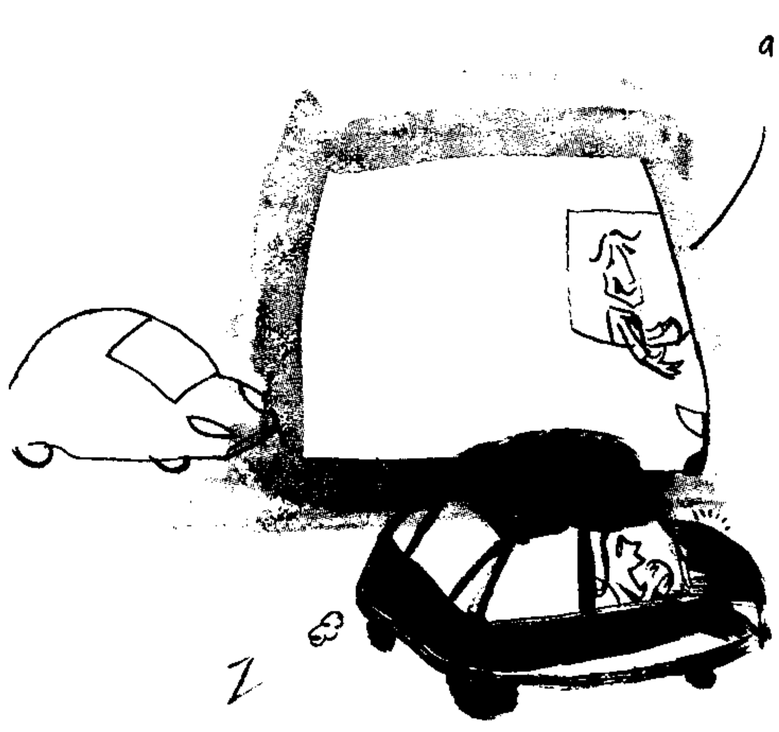
Old King Cole

Old King Cole
Was a merry old soul
And a merry old soul was he
He called for his pipe
And he called for his bowl
And he called for his fiddlers three
And they blew his fucking head off.
Not so fucking merry now,
Are you, chum?

Three Blind Mice

Three blind mice
Three blind mice
See how they run
See how they run
Well how do you think they fucking run?
They're blind so they're well and truly
Fucked when it comes to running,
So, since you ask,
They run pretty fucking badly,
You bloody fucking arsehole.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN



white van gentleman

Literary Review

'Snuff said

Snuff

Chuck Palahniuk

(Cape, £12.99)

Mr 600

I'm standing in a room with all these other dudes, all of us in our jockeys and boxers, waiting for our numbers to be called. Waiting to play our part in this extravagant and wholly redundant exercise: to shock the jaded reader with a story about a raddled old porn queen going out with a bang. A gang bang. With six hundred guys. On camera.

Some of us are just one-shot dudes, making a quick buck for a quick fuck; but some of us are veterans, some of us are real pros with a list of films as long as my arm. Maybe even as long as my dick. Films with supposedly humorous names like "The Ass Menagerie" or "The Da Vinci Load" or "To Drill a Mockingbird".

But don't let me hog the narrative. Let's hear from some of the other sad dudes all waiting to pork Miss Cassie Wright. Like that young Mr 72, who looks like he's a virgin, looking to get deflowered, or Mr 137 who's holding some kind of sick teddy bear thing under his arm.

Mr 72

Actually, she's my mom. I was what you might call a by-product, an accident waiting to happen. Given up for adoption. That's what my adoptive mother told me, when she caught me beating my adolescent meat to the sight of Miss Cassie Wright on the internet. "Do you know who that is?" she screamed at me. "That's your birth mother!" After that I ordered her inflatable doll.

Mr 137

It's not a teddy bear. It's a dog. His name is Toto and he's an autograph hound. I got all sorts of famous names on it already, names like Bette Midler and Glenn Close. I know because I wrote them all myself. (Better not drop it though, with all these guys tracking piss across the floor from the blocked toilets back there, with the low tide stink of old semen and this place being as disgusting as Mr Palahniuk can made it sound.)

I'm bringing Toto for Miss Wright to add her immortal name. I'm going to ask her out, maybe even marry her. That's how sick I am. But first I'm going to pop another of these pills.

Wouldn't you know it? That guy over there with the number 600 marked on his arm: I recognise him. I've seen his work. I've even got his dildo at home. What can I possibly say to impress him?

Mr 600

It's an exact replica, my dildo. Don't call me Branch Bacardi for nothing. Unlike some fellas' branded merchandise, it has not been enhanced in size. So that's the kind of dick(head) I am. And I am not too old to be in this game, old pro that I am. Even though I'm greased from head to toe in fake tan. Even though I just shaved my nipple off by mistake. Pass me that Kleenex.

The Talent Wrangler

My real name is Sheila. Actually it's not really, but we'll come to that. I'm the girl with the clipboard, standing here surrounded by all these nearly naked guys, calling out the numbers I wrote on their arms, calling the next batch of them to go upstairs to the film set and do their business. So what's a girl like me doing in a place like this? Follow the money.

Mr 72

The old guy's got a locket round his neck with a picture of a baby inside. Cassie's baby. So maybe he's my real dad? And now he just offered me a pill. So did Mr 137. One of them's Viagra and the other's potassium cyanide. But they both look the same. So will I die or will I fly?

Mr 600

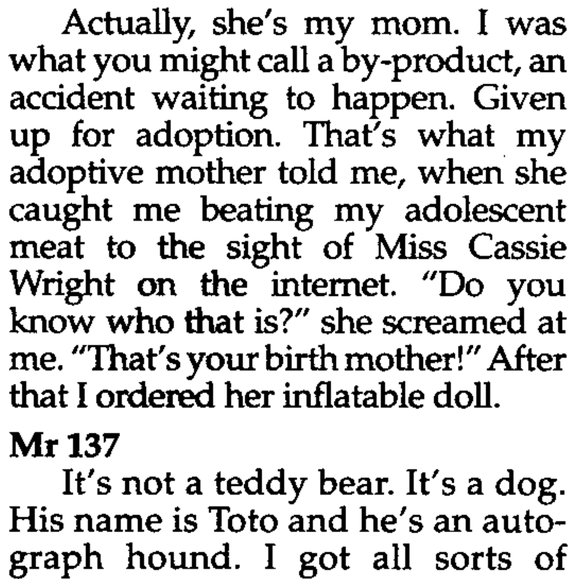
As screen partners Cassie and I go way back. And forward. And back. And forward.

Sheila

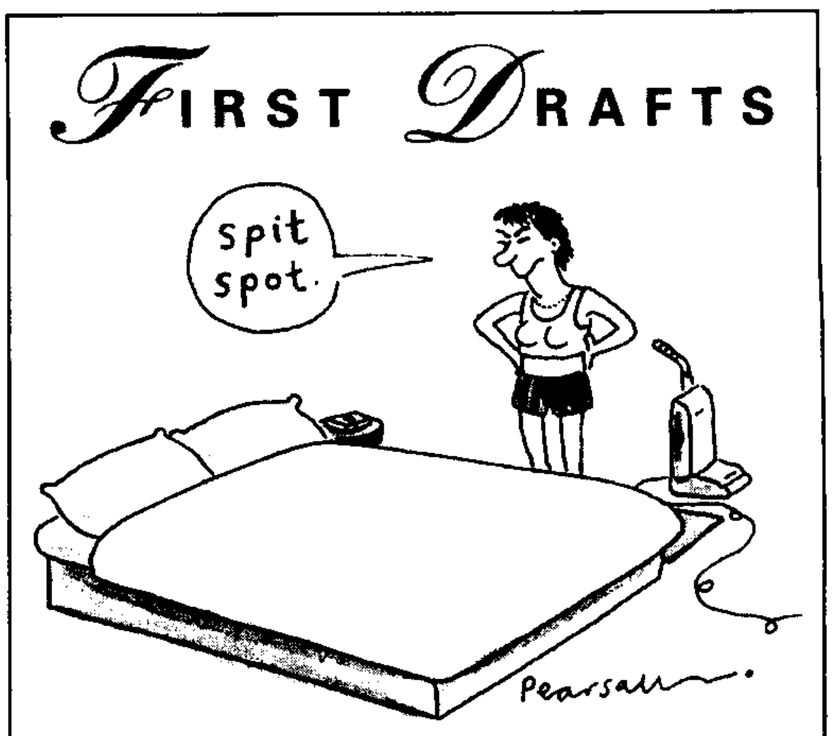
Miss Wright: she's an artist. All artists have to suffer for their art. True fact. And I make Cassie suffer because I love her. I mean, I hate her. I mean, well, you probably guessed by now that with all that life insurance and six hundred guys porking her in one session, well, chances of a big payout are pretty self-evident. The title says it all. And who'd get the money? Why that kid she gave up for adoption. Wasn't no son, though, was it?

Get it now? And all because she named me Zelda Zonk.

So what else can I say? Did we set out to make a snuff movie? Is porn boring because there can only ever be one, er, outcome? Is the moral of the story thunderingly obvious long before the pedestrian narrative has been played interminably out? Does most of it consist of regurgitated research, the reading of which would make you regurgitate? Do I really need to spell it all out? No, but because this is a Chuck Palahniuk novel I will. Ad nauseam.



"It's about this normal kid who gets sent to this school full of weirdly thin children"



Tracey Emin

Books & Bookmen

■ THE literary scene in London's East End is a little less interesting this week, after Newham council banned Kimberley Chambers from reading extracts from her novel *Billie Jo* at Beckton Library's over-55s reading group.

The oldies were looking forward to meeting former street trader and minicab driver Chambers, whose fast-moving tale of Essex girls and East End villains so impressed publisher Random House it signed her up for a three-book deal. Alas, Chambers has fallen foul of Newham council's cultural commissar, Cllr Jo Corbett, who decreed that the book was "unsuitable" and ordered the library to cancel the event.

Corbett objected because the title might be thought to refer to Billie-Jo Jenkins, the 13-year-old murdered on her family's patio in Hastings in 1997. Except it doesn't. The adventures of the novel's Billie Jo bear no resemblance to any aspect of the case and she doesn't get murdered.

Coincidentally, Sion Jenkins, the foster father of the dead girl who was convicted of her murder then freed after juries at two retrials failed to reach verdicts, has published a book, *The Murder of Billie-Jo Jenkins*, co-authored with Bob Woffinden, this month. Even when Chambers's agent pointed out Corbett's error, the council refused to relent, and *Billie Jo* and its author remain banned.

It is to be hoped that Newham council will not now try to ban Bobbie Gentry's classic 1967 pop hit *Ode to Billie Joe* from any forthcoming Sixties revival disco.

■ EARLIER this month the *Mail on Sunday* ran a review by biographer Roger Lewis of *Grub Street Irregular*, the memoirs of his distant cousin Jeremy Lewis.

"They are a mad lot, our family," he wrote, "with an above average quota of drunks, depressives, suicides and criminals. My own dear dad forged his mother's signature to get her house and tried to kill an uncle with a meat hook. He inherited a fortune and when he died four years ago there wasn't enough loot left to pay for the funeral announcement in the local paper."

The *MoS* has now received a furious letter from one Angharad Lewis – the reviewer's sister, though she omits to say so – expressing out-rage on behalf of the family at his allegations of signature-forging and inheritance-frittering. Roger Lewis seems sublimely unconcerned, assuring the paper that there are "many witnesses" who can be summoned if this Welsh tribal dispute ends up before the Press Complaints Commission, and pointing out that the most serious accusation hasn't been denied: "Not a whisper about Dad trying to kill Uncle David with a meat cleaver..."

■ IN THE August issue of *Literary Review*, Melanie Phillips enthuses about *Look at Me*, a "short but insightful" 93-page essay on celebrity culture by Peter Whittle, published by the Social Affairs Unit. This is doubly strange, as Mel P doesn't normally review for the magazine, and it doesn't normally review studies that are little more than pamphlets. So what's going on?

All becomes clear on the website of the New Culture Forum, a new right-wing outfit committed – like the Social Affairs Unit, which publishes the magazine *Standpoint* as well as books – to reversing the left's victories in the "culture wars" of recent decades. Whittle is its director and celebrated the Forum's launch in June by interviewing Phillips, who was promoting her book *Londonistan* ("she had the largely sympathetic audience eating from the palm of her hand"). Sad to relate, the *Daily Mail's* astringent, implacable Iron Lady is engaged in a spot of log-rolling.

■ MORE on Chas Newkey-Burden, the hack author turned latest best friend of Julie Burchill whom the *Eye* pointed out last month had been posting enthusiastic reviews of his own books on the Amazon website (see *Eye* 1214).

Repeated attempts by Eye readers to update Newkey-Burden's self-penned entry on that other great "free-contribution" website, Wikipedia, in the light of the Eye's revelations, were thwarted by a contributor calling themselves "Virgin711".

When challenged, Virgin 711 – whose contributions to the website are limited to the entries on Newkey-Burden and a number of other authors published by Virgin Books – announced that "I believe Private Eye has retracted their allegation now and apologised to CNB. It's against wikipedia's rules to add original research into articles so I haven't added that information (it hasn't been published) but just so you know."

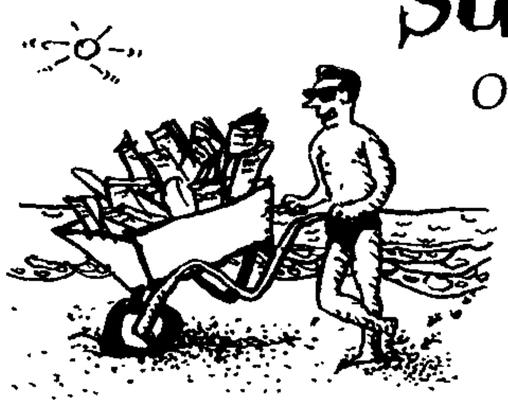
As a service to Wikipedia editors, let it here be recorded in print: have we heck.

'Bookworm'

SUMMER READING IN THE EYE

Our panel of celebrity critics reveal what they'll be packing for the beach...

2008



A.S. Byatt
Novelist and soccer pundit

Of the various professional footballers who have been privileged enough to have me write about them in the *Observer*, Paul Gascoigne is undoubtedly the most hectically Dionysian, Roy Keane the most erratically protean and Ashley Cole the most hubristically engaged. However, I will concede that Wayne Rooney's taut, precipice-encurled *Bildungsroman*, the all-too aptly named *My Story So Far* – the snag of its shrewdly provisional title simultaneously a promise and a challenge – seemed to me art of a very high order.

Andrew Roberts
Historian

I recently had the pleasure of attending a dinner at 10 Downing Street, at which a dozen or so members of my profession were invited to give a visiting President Bush the benefit of their collective wisdom. When one of those present, whom modesty forbids me to name, implored me in his homely Texan drawl to recommend a work capable of offering some insight into the British body politic, I had no hesitation in suggesting *Reason's Indomitable Voice* (University of Loamshire Press, £499.99, available from the *Spectator* book club at £495), Professor Archimedes Nangle's epochal study of Sir Horace Yaughan and his part in the reconstitution of the 1922 Backbench Committee in its dark days of Baldwin-era neglect. Sir Horace, whose influential role as PPS to Viscount Crasher, though brief in duration (January to February 1931), is too often neglected in considerations of Tory party history, while his terse refusal of the offer of a peerage in 1958 on the grounds that Macmillan was "not, strictly speaking, one of us" offers a welcome corrective to some of the debased social usages of our own time.

Jeremy Lewis
Biographer and memoirist

Incapable of performing even the most straightforward physical activity, I have always found the business of erecting a deck-chair entirely beyond me. However, once this Herculean task has been accomplished for me by my dear wife, I shall apply myself to my annual reread of *Porcelain Caverns*, Clarence Ditchwater-D'Ulle's frightfully brilliant account of his time as a lavatory attendant in Market Rasen, whose calamitous commercial failure when I published it during my time at messrs Tender & Mainprice I have never been able to understand.

D.J. Taylor
Novelist and Man of Letters

There was a moment when I feared that Paul Drudge's decade-long campaign to reawaken interest in the career of that fascinating Forties figure Harold Maclaren-Snargs, culminating in last year's *Barrel Scrapings: Selected Taxi Receipts 1942-3* had ceased to bear fruit. Happily this year's *Snatched from the Basket* (Recondite Press, £9.99), a selection of Maclaren-Snargs' postcards to his friends during the "difficult" winter of 1947 shows this legendary Soho eminence on top form. "Dear Tony" runs a typical communication from late November. "Send £2 by return, you bastard, or I'm buggered." The end-of-tether pithiness of Maclaren-Snargs' style at these junctures is one of his most... [*continues*]

Alan Hollinghurst
Novelist

I was entranced by Esme Smirk's *What I Got Up To Down Under* (Mincing Press, £9.99), a delightfully frank and engaging account of the three months its versatile author spent "meeting new friends" in parts of New Zealand that the average tourist rarely penetrates.

Charles Spencer
Aristocrat and rake

Cripes! Just read Miranda Seymour's *My Father's House* (Pocket Books, £7.99), all about this chap who loves his historic country home and whose private life, between you and me, is a bit on the iffy side. Makes you think, eh?

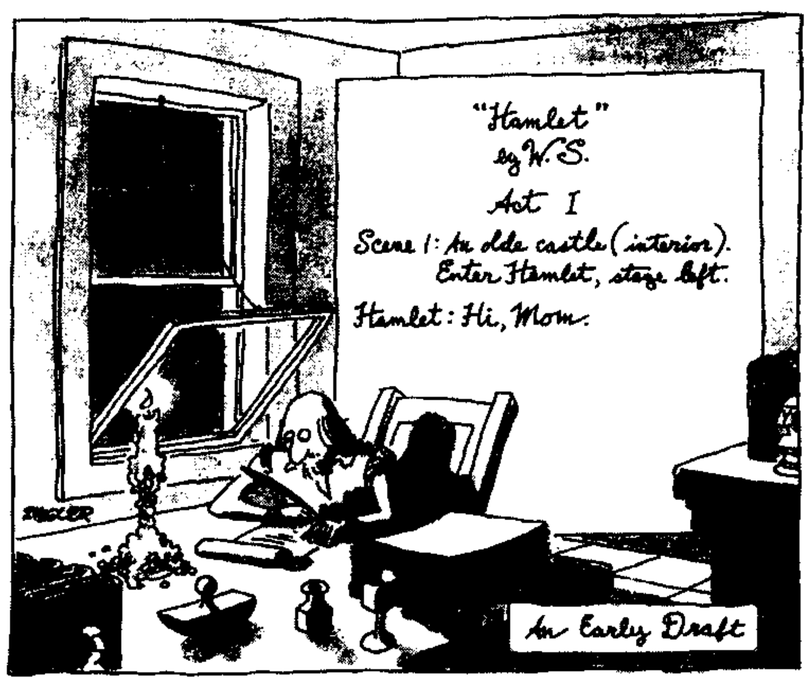
John Sutherland
Academic

It's often said – such is the abiding bitchiness of the literary scene – that the qualities of insight, judgement and critical savvy that literature professors bring to the classics altogether desert them when it comes to contemporary writing. I'm happy to say this opinion is completely misguided, and to affirm that Salman Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence* (Cape, £18.99) is one of his best novels in simply ages.

Craig Raine
Poet and score-settler

There are times when unwelcome truths need to be restated. Seriously, anyone who declines to admit the coruscating genius of my friend Ian McEwan – see in particular the paperback of his wonderful *On Chesil Beach* (Vintage, £6.99) – is simply motivated by envy. It would be nice if all these spiteful nay-sayers could be got to acknowledge the error of their ways, but will they? I think not. Bastards!

Here's a chuckle-some new idea from the New Yorker *(see right). Any relation, perchance, to a regular feature that's been running on these pages for more than five years?*



Pseuds Corner

Macaroni cheese was like a bad production of Ibsen: dull and lifeless.

JAY RAYNER,
Observer

I think it is more of a left-wing tradition – it's more egalitarian...Bikes have two wheels and they spell out equality and inclusiveness and egalitarianism.

GWYN PROSSER MP, chairman of the Commons all-party cycling group, dismisses the idea that cycling has become right-wing, *BBC Online Today*

Suddenly piers developed a reputation for uncouth misbehaviour, if not outright licentiousness. You don't have to be Sigmund Freud to work out why. If the sea stands for everything that mankind cannot control, then the pier – as potent a phallic symbol as any skyscraper – was a daring protrusion into that dangerous, boundless realm.

RICHARD MORRISON,
The Times

I speak French, English, Spanish and four unknown languages. I make these up myself. There is one for the morning, lunch, afternoon and night. The language for the morning is very slow, like 'mebwehmeh', that might mean 'I want more sleep'. The language for the evening is much faster and a little hectic. And a little more Latin. That could be 'keteket ekete kete', which would mean 'I'm so excited I'm going to wear my pink boots tonight!'

Singer CAMILLE,
Time Out

Native Americans are the Aboriginals of America, which explains why I'm wearing the headdress. The true Aboriginals of America are the Moors, who also have history all over Europe. When Columbus came to America, he knew where he was because he had maps from the Moors, who had already been and lived there. Pedro the Moor brought him here on the boat. I've got headdresses and robes from all over: I am the mystery of everybody's story.

Musician AFRIKA BAMBAATAA, 'How Do I Look', *Independent Magazine*

And worst of all. Dumbest, deafest, shittest of all, you have removed the unstressed 'a' so that the stress that should have fallen on 'nosh' is lost, and my piece ends on an unstressed syllable. When you're winding up a piece of prose, metre is crucial. Can't you hear? Can't you hear that it is wrong? It's not fucking rocket science. It's fucking pre-GCSE scansion. I have written 350 restaurant reviews for The Times *and I have never ended on an unstressed syllable. Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck.*

Times* restaurant critic GILES COREN rebukes his sub-editors, quoted in the *Guardian

CONTRIBUTORS: Kathleen Menzies, Matthew Bazeley, Lynne Booth, Richard Waites, Patricia Hammond, Michael Dalling.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

A Greek tragedy

WHEN 18-year-old Andrew Symeou returned from an 18-30 holiday on the Greek island of Zante last summer, he told his parents he had had the best time of his life – a perfect antidote to the strain of taking his A levels.

Seven weeks ago Metropolitan police knocked at Symeou's door, brandishing a Greek warrant for his arrest for causing "lethal bodily harm" to a young Brit called Jonny Hiles, a promising Welsh roller hockey player, at a Zante nightclub on 20 July 2007. Andrew is accused of throwing a punch at Jonny, causing him to fall from a platform and hit his head. He died two days later in a hospital in Athens.

Andrew is adamant he has never thrown a punch at anyone in his life and certainly the evidence assembled against him by Greek police, seen by the *Eye*, is flawed, contradictory and in places ludicrous. At the heart of it are statements implicating Andrew which were obtained from two of his friends after they had been beaten, threatened and detained for more than eight hours. The pair complained to British consular officials that in their terrified state they repeated whatever the police or interpreter told them to say – and that they had no idea what they signed.

Andrew, whose two-week holiday ended before theirs, had already flown home and knew nothing of the disaster that had befallen 19-year-old Jonny Hiles, or of his friends' interrogation by the police, until they returned and told him. Since Greek police made no attempt to contact or interview Andrew for nearly a year, he and his family assumed the authorities had realised their mistake.

Then, out of the blue, Scotland Yard officers arrived and arrested him. Under the terms of the European arrest warrant none of the evidence in the case will be scrutinised by our courts ahead of extradition, and in Greece he won't be given the same legal protection that he would have in the UK. The bundle of "evidence" suggests he has every right to be worried:

- Five of Jonny Hiles's friends gave initial statements describing the assailant as a dark, clean-shaven man in a blue polo shirt, a man so drunk he had been urinating on the dance floor. Andrew had a distinctive goatee-type beard and moustache and was wearing a bright yellow tee-shirt that night. He has witness statements and evidence from friends' phones and cameras, which are now with forensic experts.
- When the five friends were later shown a photograph of Andrew with his goatee, taken in the club the night before, they apparently all made identical new statements in which they said "the perpetrator had shaved off his goatee on the day of the incident and had left only slightly longer sideburns". Fortunately for Andrew, he has a photograph taken at his sister's graduation on 24 July, four days after the incident, still sporting the beard and moustache.
- Not only were those statements identical, suggesting dictation or fabrication, but they are markedly different from statements taken from the five friends by police in Wales, on behalf of the coroner who is to conduct an inquest. The only one of the five who actually witnessed the punch says in his UK statement that the assailant was *not* the dark-haired drunk but a friend of his who was blond.
- A further three statements taken from the friends on different days, supposedly by different officers, also use identical wording. Greek police and interpreters are listed as taking statements from different witnesses at the same time.
- Jonny Hiles was attacked at around 1am. Andrew has witnesses who confirm that he didn't arrive at the nightclub until about 4am, after leaving another disco, and departed 20 minutes later. CCTV footage obtained by the Greek police should confirm this – but it is now mysteriously missing, as is footage of men seen hurrying away from the club immediately after the incident, one of whom was said by Hiles's friends to resemble the urinating man from the dancefloor.

What the dossier also indicates, distressingly for Hiles's family, is that neither police nor medical staff took his deteriorating condition seriously. Staff at the local hospital thought he was "drunk and sleeping" and left him on a trolley in the corridor; his friends had to pay cash up front for a scan to determine how serious his head injury was. Not until the following afternoon was he transferred to a hospital in Athens; there was further delay before he moved into intensive care.

It was only then, and only after consular officials were involved, that police went into action. Having previously refused to take statements from Mr Hiles's friends, they now showed them CCTV film and photographs of crowds at the disco the night before. The friends say they pointed to a couple of people who they believed to be the urinating man and his friend. It's not clear if these photographs are the ones in the file which show Andrew's bearded head circled with the word "perpetrator" in Greek (pictured).

Andrew's extradition hearing is due next month. His lawyers will argue that the beating up of his friends and the conduct of the investigating officers in manufacturing or manipulating evidence amounts to an abuse of process. They also point out that the Greek authorities had the evidence for 10 months without interviewing Andrew or other witnesses who could account for his whereabouts.

None of this is any consolation to Jonny Hiles's grieving family, who want to see justice for their son and learn the truth about his death. On the evidence so far, there's little chance that the trial of Andrew Symeou will achieve anything of the kind.

Fourth time unlucky

WHEN the *Eye* last reported on the blatant injustice that befell Tony Stock, convicted of robbery 38 years ago, we asked whether m'learned friends in the court of appeal would finally be prepared to admit that their colleagues had got it wrong.

Clearly not. Last week, Lord Justice Latham, Mr Justice Forbes and Dame Heather Steel in their ten page judgement, dismissed in just 15 paragraphs the five grounds of appeal set out by the unusually dogged criminal cases review commission for Stock's record fourth appeal. It was a judgment of scant regard to a huge amount of detail, and Stock and his lawyers will almost certainly appeal to the House of Lords, no doubt with the blessing of those at the CCRC who have spent years and much money independently reviewing the evidence.

The appeal court had been told by Stock's QC, Joel Bennathan, that "virtually no part of the prosecution case had been left undamaged" by a lethal combination of a corrupt police officer, dodgy identification evidence and a flawed summing-up at Stock's original trial in 1970.

Furthermore, there was "compelling" new evidence that Stock was not part of the violent gang who robbed two Tesco employees in Leeds of the store's cash takings.

Eye readers may recall that Stock, now 68, was arrested because it was said he looked like an identikit picture created by a witness who had caught a brief look on a wet, dark night at one of the robbers, who threatened him with an iron bar. The witness was taken to Stock's house for a "doorstep identification" – which would not now be permitted. There was a further, now-outlawed "dock" identification by three Tesco employees who said they had seen Stock in the store on previous occasions.

Despite an alibi from his wife that they were together celebrating his birthday, he was convicted and sentenced to 10 years. His first appeal failed in 1971 and Stock completed his jail term a "guilty man".

Tony Stock in 1971

Then, luckily for him – or so he thought – a man called Samuel Benefield, who belonged to a notorious gang that had stolen £2.5m in a series of raids all over the country, was arrested and turned supergrass. He gave evidence in 15 robbery trials, which resulted in convictions where criminals served over 20 years. He also confessed to the Tesco robbery, giving police a detailed account of the raid and naming his four associates.

The home office ordered a police inquiry into the safety of Stock's conviction, which centred on the conduct of the arresting officers. But William Whitelaw, the home secretary at the time, refused to refer the case back to the appeal court. Twelve years later, another Tory home secretary, Michael Howard, did, and everyone believed Stock would finally be cleared.

They accounted not for the court of appeal. While the courts had relied on the evidence of Benefield in so many other cases, this time the judges decided he made the story up simply so he could exculpate Stock – despite the extraordinary amount of detail he supplied.

In 2004 Stock's lawyers had another go – this time backed by the then new CCRC. Once again the court threw out the appeal, questioning the value of the CCRC's detailed dossier. Uniquely, the CCRC doggedly submitted yet another dossier to the court of appeal. It detailed material not disclosed to the defence at trial, new evidence surrounding the detail of Benefield's supergrass evidence, and serious shortfalls in the previous police inquiry into the conviction.

How did the judges manage to dismiss the combined thrust of this new material? They relied upon the identikit picture drawn up by the key eyewitness. They dismissed suggestions that the Tesco witnesses had originally identified someone other than Stock and that the key eye-witness, when first shown a picture of Stock, had said he was similar to, but was not the robber.

The rest of the gang declined to give statements on Stock's behalf, but the appeal court declined to allow evidence from Stock's solicitor, Glyn Maddocks, about his conversations with one of them.

The three judges spelt out the court's legal limitations when considering an appeal that their colleagues have thrown out. They said the court had to "give weight to" and "be slow to differ from" the previous ruling – unless there is some strong new argument that might have persuaded the previous appeal to quash the conviction. Even more so, no doubt, when the appeal judge who rejected Benefield's evidence and ignored the impact of dodgy identification and a dishonest copper back in 1996 was none other than Judge Dreadful himself, Igor Judge, our new lord chief justice.

NHS PLC

Renal failure

THE LATEST private equity-funded company aggressively targeting Britain's National Health Service is Hungarian firm Euromedic, bought two months ago by Swiss billionaire Ernesto Bertarelli (pictured, above) with the backing of Merrill Lynch.

Euromedic specialises in diagnostics and renal dialysis, both prime territory for British health privatisation, and does very nicely out of it, too. The outfit that sold Euromedic to Bertarelli and co, Warburg Pincus, trebled its investment on the deal on the back of operations across central and eastern Europe. Analysts predict profits of €60m this year.

But such commercial success doesn't come without its victims. Buried away in the unpublished accounts of a Dutch holding company, Euromedic International Holdings BV, is chilling evidence of its recent record. "In July 2006 during routine blood testing," notes the company, "it was discovered that 49 patients in the group's dialysis center [sic] in Ostrow Wielkopolskie [Poland] had been infected by the Hepatitis C [HVC] virus. A subsequent investigation revealed that the infection occurred due to negligent behaviour of the chief doctor and chief nurse of the dialysis center." Owing to a cock-up with its medical malpractice insurance, Euromedic had to cough up €449,000.

No such money worries in Turkey where, the report continues: "In November 2006 during a routine laboratory test it was discovered that 22 patients (out of 200) in the group's dialysis centre in Diyarbakir, Turkey had been infected with the HVC virus. Through an investigation conducted by the local health authority certain irregularities have been unveiled in the center."

Despite its culpability, Euromedic is confident of getting off scot-free. "No claims thus far have been brought forward by the patients, though such a risk exists," the company states coldly. "Malpractice suits are not common in Turkey and in previous instances when courts have approved patient claims, the financial costs have been minimal... No provision has been made for such costs."

Asked by the *Eye* whether his firm really was leaving 22 patients high and dry after infecting them with a lethal virus, Euromedic's chief executive Keith Evans – whose reassuring CV includes private health firm Mercury, Capita and Accenture – confirmed that the victims hadn't been offered a penny. "Local custom is taken into account in deciding how these cases are handled," he claimed. In other words: a bunch of HVC-positive Turks aren't going to sue, so let's cut and run. The Turkish clinic has since been sold. Job done.

Among the British patients who can look forward to the Euromedic treatment are those requiring dialysis in the East Midlands where, by substantially under-bidding its rivals, the company has won a "framework" contract to run dialysis units for a network of trusts, including the University of Leicester Hospital NHS Trust.

The firm is also bidding for a £100m deal to provide dialysis services for the NHS in south London. Lead trust St George's is none too happy, however, with Euromedic's tactic of prematurely announcing an "understanding" with the trusts, well ahead of even submitting a bid. It might be equally unimpressed with the company's record of infecting patients with a deadly virus, then abandoning them.

PS: Euromedic's new owner, Mr Bertarelli, it so happens, also sits on the board of the same Swiss bank, UBS, that now employs Ken Anderson, the erstwhile NHS commercial director who did so much to push the NHS's use of private treatment centres in the first place.

DEFENCE TRAINING

The price is frightful

THE BIZARRE plan to privatise military training under a 30-year PFI deal is already vastly over budget and the contract isn't even signed yet.

At a local "stakeholders'" meeting in the Vale of Glamorgan, home to a proposed new defence academy, the Ministry of Defence's officer in charge, Brigadier Geoff Nield, let slip that the price had gone up from £11bn to £12bn. As the deal was slated to save the MoD just £400m at the old price, it seems the scheme will not only expose the armed forces to serious operational risks (see *Eye* 1213) but will actually cost the taxpayer hundreds of millions *more* than keeping training in-house. Doh!

The plan has only got as far as it has because parliamentary interest has been confined to a handful of MPs battling to get the business into their constituencies. Cheerleader-in-chief is the Vale's Labour MP, John Smith – named Welsh campaigning MP of the year last year for his successful crusade to get the defence academy located at St Athan, on his patch.

Smith remains desperate to present the privatisation deal as good news. Of the £1bn price hike, he even told the *South Wales Echo*: "This is great news for the Vale economy. This extra £1bn will be felt by people and businesses in the Vale. It will mean that the Defence Technical Academy will inject more money into the local economy each year than previously thought." The paper duly headlined its puff piece: "£1bn investment boost for training academy".

A quick check with the MoD confirmed this to be complete nonsense. "The increase of the DTR programme costs from £11bn to £12bn was not announced as an extra investment, it is the revised cost of the programme," said a spokeswoman. "The increase is due to the impact of inflation and borrowing costs and the current economic climate, not just directly associated with cost growth". Not much there for the people of South Wales.

PS: Delays have already led the National Audit Office to pull previous plans to investigate the deal. The Metrix consortium of usual suspects (including EDS, QinetiQ and Raytheon), which has been handed the ever-inflating contract, will be relieved.

PPS: The academy has turned Welsh first minister Rhodri Morgan's head, too. Last month he told a French newspaper: "The defence training academy at St Athan in the Vale of Glamorgan will provide thousands of high-quality jobs, training service personnel in an academic environment that will turn Oxford and Cambridge green with envy when it opens for business next decade." Yeah, right.

THE SALLY MURRER CASE

What a tangled Webb

INSPECTOR Knacker's clod-hopping pursuit of local newspaper reporter Sally Murrer and her police contacts has already had the unintended consequence of showing that human-rights lawyers and the MP Sadiq Khan were secretly bugged while talking to prisoners. Now, more embarrassingly still, it threatens to expose sexual shenanigans involving senior government figures and members of the judiciary.

The allegations are contained in the diaries of former police officer and private investigator Derek Webb, who is accused alongside Murrer and her ex-partner and police contact Mark Kearney with various obscure misconduct in public office charges (see *Eye* 1207).

Seized by Thames Valley police as part of their investigation into the trio, the diaries describe surveillance operations he carried out for tabloid newspapers on high-profile targets suspected of having affairs. Two government ministers are said to be mentioned, as well as the former attorney general Lord Goldsmith (pictured, right) and the outgoing director of public prosecutions, Sir Ken Macdonald.

Goldsmith admitted an affair with a female colleague when confronted last year. Soon afterwards it was Sir Ken's turn, as the *Daily Mail* disclosed that he too had been exceeding his briefs with a young female barrister. As head of the CPS, Sir Ken is technically in charge of prosecuting the man who investigated him for the tabloids, Derek Webb.

Webb's lawyers maintain that he needs his diaries to respond fully to the charges he faces. Initially the CPS said it was withholding them, while denying that it was trying to preserve anybody's reputation. Now it says it doesn't have the diaries.

Webb and his team are unlikely to leave it there. They could bring an allegation of theft against Thames Valley police, issue a personal property summons against the chief constable or seek a court hearing over the matter, which could lead to the naming of certain politicians and legal bigwigs in court – thus allowing libel-proof publication of the salacious allegations that the tabloids wanted to make in the first place. Brilliant!

CDC

Copper slated

PUBLICLY owned development fund CDC, which, as the Commonwealth Development Corporation used to invest directly in grassroots businesses in the developing world, now styles itself a "fund of funds", putting development cash in the hands of private-equity fund managers.

As well as the bumper private-equity returns on offer (*Eyes passim*), one of the attractions is that the extra layer distances it from the more questionable activities of the highly profitable companies into which it ploughs the British taxpayer's money.

One such private-equity outfit is the worthy-sounding US-based Emerging Capital Partners (ECP), into which CDC has placed around £14m since 2005. In 2006 ECP used some of this and other cash to invest in a commercially successful but highly dubious Australian-Canadian company called Anvil Mining, which specialises in copper extraction in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In October 2004 Anvil provided transport and drivers to the 62nd brigade of the Congolese army so it could dislodge a group of six rebels interfering with Anvil's activities at the Dikulushi mine in Kilwa, Katanga province. The result was the extrajudicial execution of more than 70 civilians and several rapes. After the massacre, Anvil told campaigners for justice that its vehicles had been requisitioned by the military, but repeatedly failed to produce any evidence of this, while a World Bank audit found that the company hadn't followed its "voluntary principles on security and human rights".

But Anvil retains the support of the department for international development, whose minister, Baroness Shriti Vadera (pictured, above), last year visited Katanga and talked to Anvil executives to promote "a partnership with companies willing to adhere to higher corporate standards – including Anvil – and the provincial government in Katanga..." Oddly Anvil's "higher corporate standards" don't extend to paying compensation or taking any form of responsibility for its role in the Kilwa massacre.

In the City

BRITAIN's success at the Beijing Olympics has been rightly celebrated by those organising London 2012, led by former double gold medalist Sebastian Coe. However, less attention has been paid to the continued commercial failure of Lord Coe's company, Complete Leisure Group (CLG).

CLG was set up in 2005, soon after London won the bid to stage the 2012 games. A raft of colourful investors, including William Hague but largely recruited by Monaco-based promoter and perpetual business also-ran Peter Abbey, put in a total of £1m. The aim was to build a sports business helped by the Coe name and reputation.

For starters CLG acquired the company that owned the stellar Coe image, intellectual property rights and personal contracts for shares which soon had an implied value of £2.8m on the price paid by the outside investors and would have been worth even more come the planned AIM flotation. Coe remains the biggest shareholder in CLG.

"Perhaps we shouldn't have outsourced the paddle"

But the promised flotation within a year failed to materialise – in part because of concerns about a possible conflict of interest between Coe's role at CLG and his chairmanship of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (Locog). Nor did any of the promised sporting ventures materialise either. Only the Sebastian Coe business has prospered – perhaps not surprisingly given his raised profile as Locog chairman.

The latest CLG accounts, published before the Beijing games opened, reveal that the company earned £506,000 in the year to December 2007 from exploiting the "intellectual property and image rights relating to Lord Coe". This compared with £327,000 in 2006. Curiously the figures for the subsidiary Sebastian Coe Limited, which owns those rights, showed a fall in revenues from £701,000 to £456,000. This included £16,000 charged to 0800 Reverse, the reverse call telecom company where Lord Coe is a director.

Despite that setback, the highest paid director of Sebastian Coe Limited – presumed to be the man himself as he was the only director for nine months of 2007 – was paid £334,500. This is far beyond the £220,000 CLG paid in 2006 to the now departed Tim Howland who was then running the group. But partly as a result of that payment, Sebastian Coe Limited lost £112,000 compared with a 2006 profit of £136,000 when there was no payment to directors. Clearly CLG's troubles have not hurt the Coe brand too much.

Coe's possible gold standard benefits may raise some eyebrows given that he was paid £285,000 to head Locog in the year to March 2007 and, it is presumed, was paid a similar sum for 2008. The Locog accounts are due later this month.

Coe has always denied there is any conflict of interest between his roles at CLG and Locog because London 2012 is "ring fenced" and any contracts for CLG that might create a conflict have to be approved by the Olympic mandarins. He has also pointed to the continued benefits of contracts he entered into before London 2012 happened.

However, the extent of CLG's reliance on earnings from the Coe brand – sports consultancy earned a mere £70,000 compared with £434,000 in 2006 – is certain to give ammunition to unfair critics of Coe's public spirited motivation.

Certainly CLG has not turned out as Coe or its new saviour, Jaeger clothing millionaire Harold Tillman, would have hoped. Chairman Tillman pumped £100,000 in for a share stake last year as well as lending the company £50,000 interest free and guaranteeing its £150,000 overdraft at HSBC. All help that CLG needs: the company had net current liabilities of almost £300,000.

The company lost £759,000 last year – little improvement on the £832,000 lost in 2006. Expenses were more than £1.1m compared with turnover of £576,000. Another £200,000 also had to be charged to write off loans made to investors who demanded their money back after there was no AIM float.

Tillman told shareholders the results were " a disappointment to all of us". He blamed legal and professional costs plus salaries incurred by former directors. However, there is some good news. There was a pre-tax profit for the first half of this year thanks to reduced costs. And the company has "implemented an investment strategy for the business which places less reliance on Lord Coe's image rights".

CLG has provided against £150,000 owed by shareholder Moore Clayton & Co, part of the private equity/venture capital group MCC Global that is listed on the Frankfurt stock market. This is part of £225,000 which Moore Clayton initially invested in CLG shares that was converted into a loan due for repayment first in December 2006 and then March 2008. The still outstanding £150,000 has been written off "due to uncertainty over the recoverability". A point which raises some interesting questions about MCC.

Another £50,000 has been provided against a £100,000 loan made in similar circumstances to shareholder October Investments, a Gibraltar company run by Stephen Wheatley. October and Wheatley have been linked with a number of deals involving London property man Laurence Davis, a close associate of Abbey and an investor in CLG. Several of the CLG investors were investors in Davis deals. October was due to repay the £100,000 in June 2007, extended to March this year. Half of this has now also been written off "due to uncertainty over the recoverability".

Lord Coe must hope that Harold Tillman will be able to bring his revival skills to work on Complete Leisure Group which otherwise could prove a continuing embarrassment on the road to London 2012.

PLANET FOOTBALL
Manchester City

THE realization that saviour Thaksin Shinawatra may be nothing of the sort, now that he is again a fugitive from Thai justice, will hardly dull the pain for City supporters after an opening day thumping from Aston Villa.

The one-time billionaire now has most of his fortune – $2bn – frozen in Thailand where he is subject of an arrest warrant on corruption charges. Thaksin's wife has already been convicted on tax evasion charges by courts which he clearly expected to be more sympathetic following election of a pro-Thaksin government to replace the generals who overthrew him in 2006.

These developments have no doubt been met with relief at accountants KPMG which quietly resigned as auditor to Manchester City in October last year to be replaced by BDO Stoy Hayward. The Thaksin takeover had taken place in July. It seems KPMG may have had understandable reputational concerns about association with the Thai businessman turned politician given the charges he already faced in Thailand.

Meanwhile further evidence that Manchester City may have to become reliant on more traditional sources of finance is indicated by two new charges granted to Standard Bank last month. The club would appear to have assigned to the bank a series of expected payments from the Premier League relating to TV money, as well as the merit and basic award fund payments plus the stabilised cashflow payments due in January 2009 or payable over the next two seasons. These are security for a facility agreed with Standard Bank on 21 July. The facility is guaranteed by the club and by Thaksin's company UK Sports Investments (Holdings), which owns Manchester City.

All of which helps explain why new manager Mark Hughes has not been active in the transfer market despite what he no doubt assumed was an open cheque book.

Thaksin had returned to Thailand from exile in London. But it is clear that the legal tide has turned against him. Not only have the courts decided to continue with the corruption charges, but three of his lawyers have been jailed for attempting to bribe court officials and a key political ally has been found guilty of vote fraud. This could endanger the coalition formed with the pro-Thaksin People Power Party.

All of which raises interesting questions both for the Premier League over its "fit and proper" test for owners and as to how Britain could deny an extradition request for Thaksin and his wife now that the generals are no longer in power. Thaksin has always denied wrongdoing and maintained that the charges were trumped up by his political enemies. Before heading to London from Beijing, Thaksin had promised to fight the charges – but that was before his wife was given a prison sentence.

PLANET FOOTBALL
Portsmouth

PORTSMOUTH is another club where, perhaps surprisingly, money would seem too tight to mention, despite the presence of a moneybags foreign owner – Alexandre Gaydamak. The FA

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG

THEY SAY WE'RE GOING BACK TO THE SEVENTIES!
STAGFLATION THREAT!
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NOT THAT PART OF THE SEVENTIES! GET BACK TO WORK!

Cup winners are also clients of Standard Bank since last year; and the Icelandic-owned Singer & Friedlander; so they already are not just beneficiaries of the Gaydamak private purse.

Chief executive Peter Storrie blames the credit crunch for Portsmouth's need to sell players like Sulley Muntari and Pedro Mendes for a total of around £16m, while signing Peter Crouch for £9m on suspected delayed terms. Certainly loss-making football clubs are nowhere near the top of the popularity chart for banks looking to cut lending and avoid problem loans as companies start to fail.

What is unclear is what connection if any there may be between the sudden squeeze at Portsmouth and the problems faced by Alexandre's father, Arkady Gaydamak. Surely none as both father and son have always denied that Arkady has any involvement in Portsmouth. But Gaydamak Snr's fortune has always been easier to trace than his son's. However, only in February junior completed the purchase of control of AIM-listed Domino Pizza franchisee Global Brands for $5.6m.

As at Manchester City, it may also be that there are unjustified reputational concerns about the Gaydamak connection now that Arkady faces trial in France on charges of illegal arms dealing with Angola during the 1990s. The trial of some 40 defendants is due to start in October. However, there is said to be political pressure in France to make this embarrassing trial go away and not harm relations with oil rich Angola.

Then there is the prospect that Gaydamak senior may face money laundering and aggravated fraud charges in Israel over a $50m Dutch deal. State prosecutors have already notified Gaydamak that they are considering charges, say reports in Israel.

Arkady Gaydamak, who now lives in Israel, where he nurtures political ambitions, has always denied the French charges and refused to return there to be questioned. He has also denied any involvement in money laundering. Alexandre Gaydamak is not involved in the French or Israeli cases.

After the opening day beating at Chelsea, Pompey fans will be hoping for the best.

SERIOUS Farce Office director Richard "Grey Man" Alderman assured BBC Radio 4 listeners, in the wake of the law lords' decision last month confirming that the BAE Systems/ Saudi kickbacks case was dead, that he really was "very interested" in pursuing corruption cases – despite appealing to the Lords over BAE and closing down a long-running investigation over a contract in the Balkans. Britain and the SFO have yet to bring a single successful overseas corruption prosecution – much to the anger of the OECD anti-bribery committee, which is expected to give Britain another kicking when it meets in October.

At the heart of this failure may be the legal advice accepted by Alderman that to succeed under existing legislation – despite signing an anti-bribery convention Britain has yet to introduce a modern effective law – prosecutors must prove that a "substantive" part of the corruption occurred in Britain. This seemingly was the reason for dropping the Balkan case.

The problem is that most substantive acts in overseas bribery cases take place either in the home of the contract or deal or in the tax havens to which the pay-offs are directed. The bribery may be signed off at the UK head office and the funds may originate there, but most of the action will be outside the UK. That is why companies use local agents to provide a cutout. They have the connections, win the contracts, are paid the commissions and distribute the bribes. That way the UK company has deniability for everything.

If that "substantive" test remains the legal view, then it is hard to imagine exactly how the SFO will find cases to overcome such a high evidential hurdle. But no doubt Grey Man will remain "very interested" in prosecuting corruption while hunting down consumer fraudsters and educating the public on how to avoid being a victim.

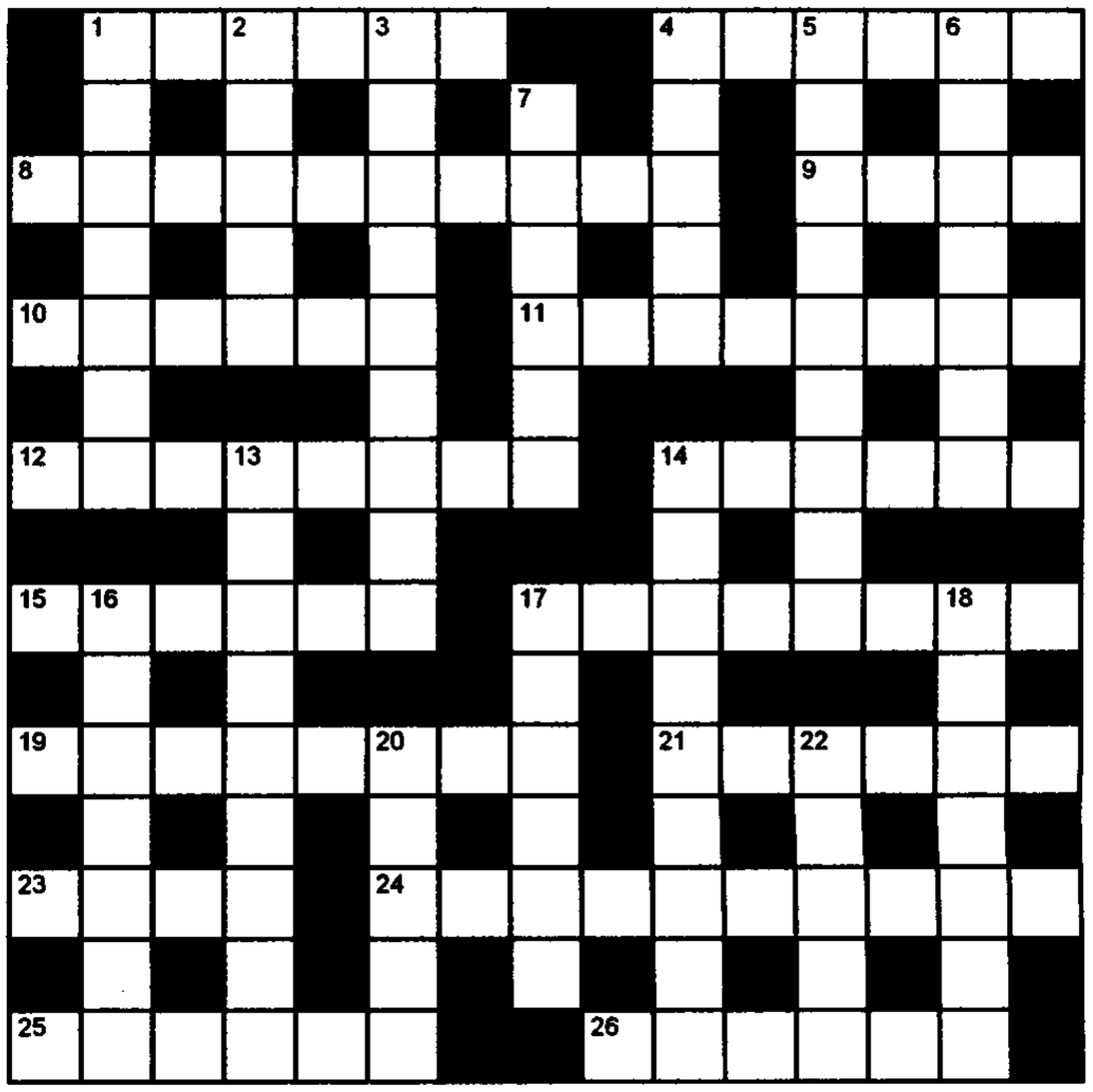
'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 372

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 29 August 2008

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1/4 The opposition he'll have soundly beaten to stay at the top (6,6)
8 "Band takes drink with speed and ecstasy starters" provocative revelation (10)
9 Labour finally gets in new reviled leader (4)
10 Physicist's method with emptied penis (6)
11 Entertained by rock star, Brenda's given "line" – "Top-notch!" (8)
12 Right depressed being a confirmed Cameron supporter? (4,4)
14 See 23ac.
15 Queen-like, Camilla's opening in a big way (6)
17 Instrument altering nuts (8)
19 Nick Brown's first to enter melée (broadcast) – sounds of sleep to be stifled (8)
21 Labour not necessarily a welcome prospect for those who do (6)
23/14ac. Nazi type article: it's backed by regressive newspaper editor's leader (4-6)
24 Underlying reality of arse having a row (6,4)
25 Sing out "Mia" vociferously – it's a war scene (6)
26 Poncey fundraiser's after two large bra sizes (6)

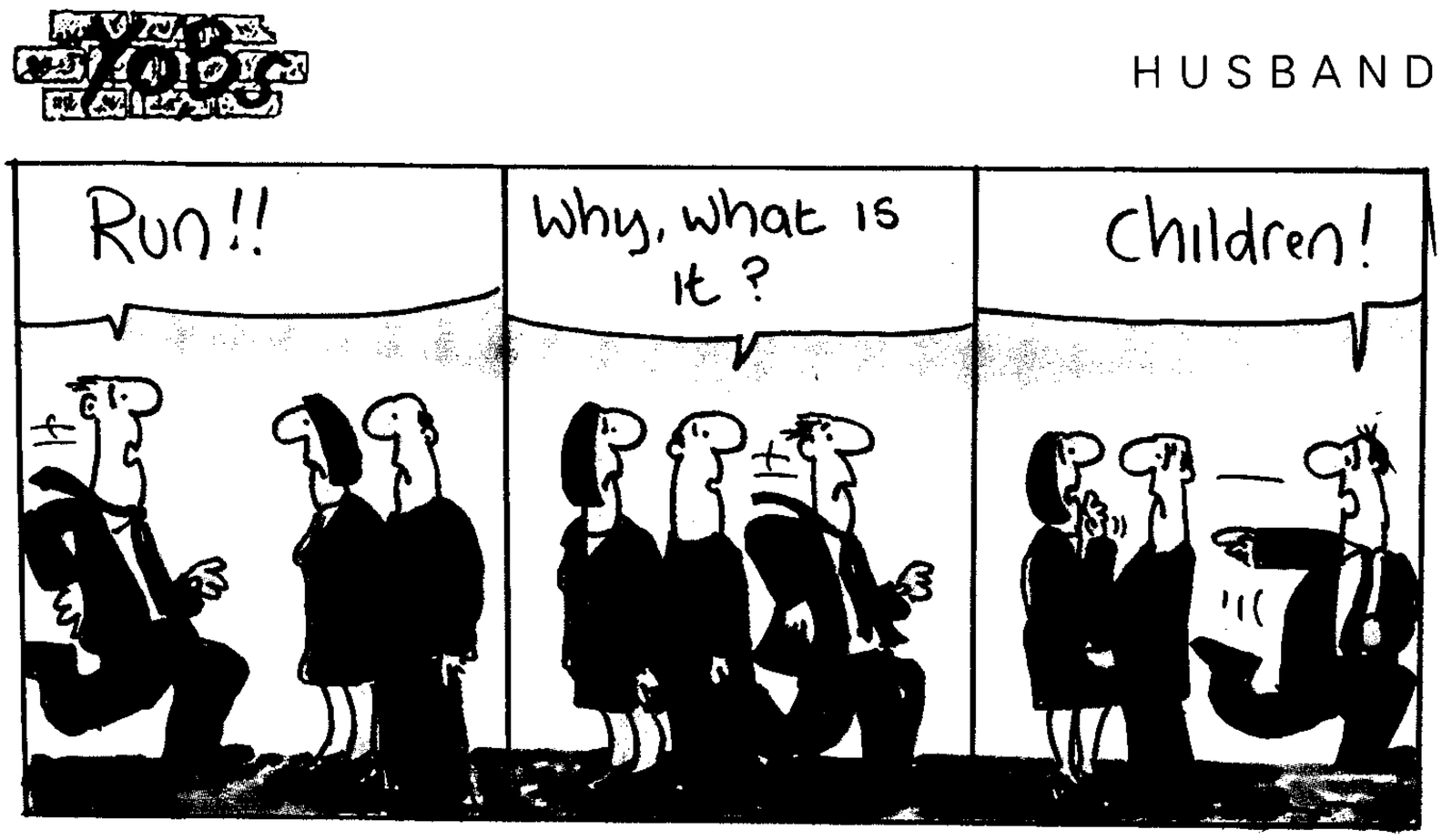
DOWN

1 Arse let out to cover tip of trouser snake (7)
2 Brenda's own bit of rough at breakfast? "One's captivated" (5)
3 Hurley with kit off, left for one minister (4,5)
4 Cyclops's organ and balls (2,3)
5 Bog makes soft soldiers (9)
6 Noble, neat Boris is out rocking (7)
7 Twit (London's leader) entertained by diplomat – "pain in the arse!" (6)
13 English "hump me" is rewritten as e.g. "Let's play bury the sausage" (9)
14 Evades responsibility, heaves up over Victoria's top – infra dig (6,3)
16 Party leader extremely lacking meeting Brenda's old social worker (7)
17 Stuff getting into tax covenant! (6)
18 Lousy types stuck outside enclosure leave (7)
20 African provides half of Australia with electronic underwear (5)
22 Smashing plus, erection's first beat (5)

Crossword 371 winner: ADAM BENNETT

Across: 1 Appeal 4 Scramble 10 Goolies 11 Flatter 12/25 Bedpan 13 Opinion poll 14/27 Alistair Darling 16 Piss-up 19 Bo-peep 20 Chutzpah 23 Misconstrue 26 Atishoo 28 The trots 29 Jerkin.

Down: 1 Algebra 2 Proud 3/24 A bit of the other 5 Coffin 6/17 A pain in the arse 7 Bottoms up 8 Earflap 9 Aspirin 15 Impassive 18 Charade 19 Bombast 21 Handgun 22 Escort 25 Prick.



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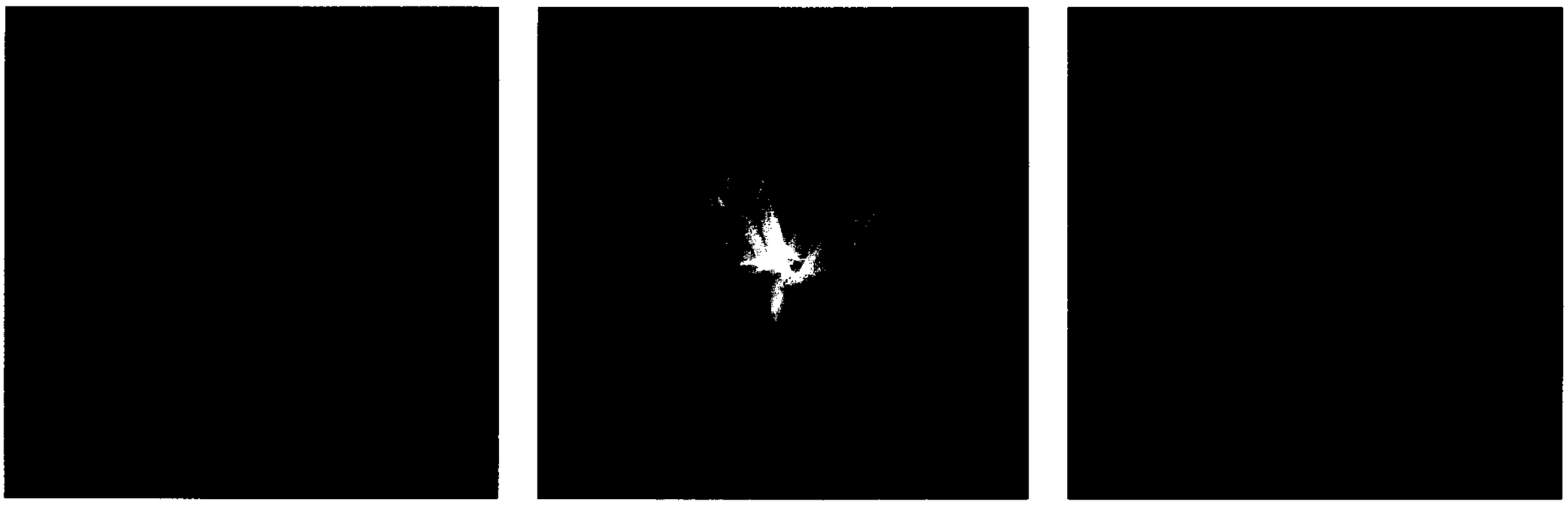

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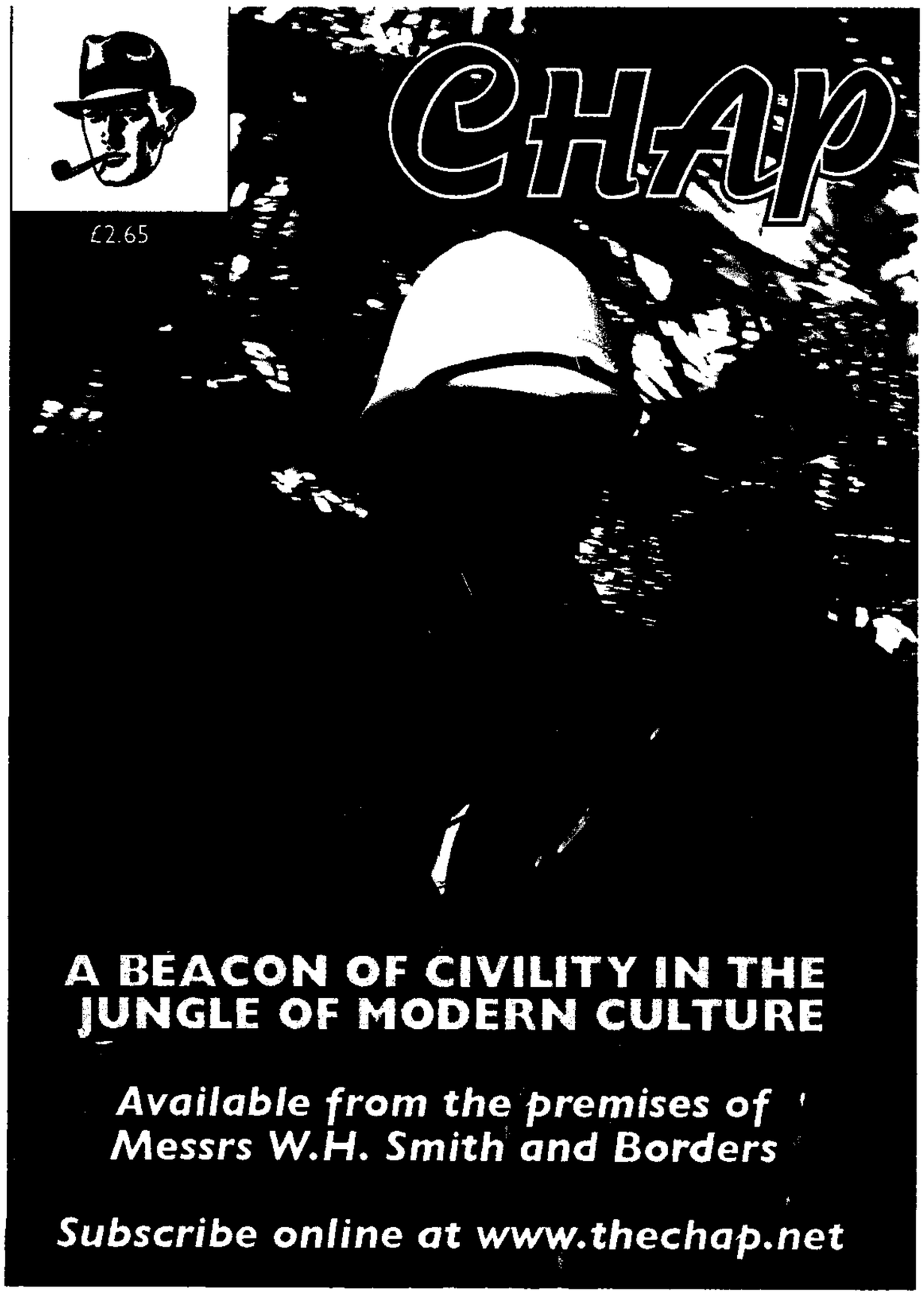
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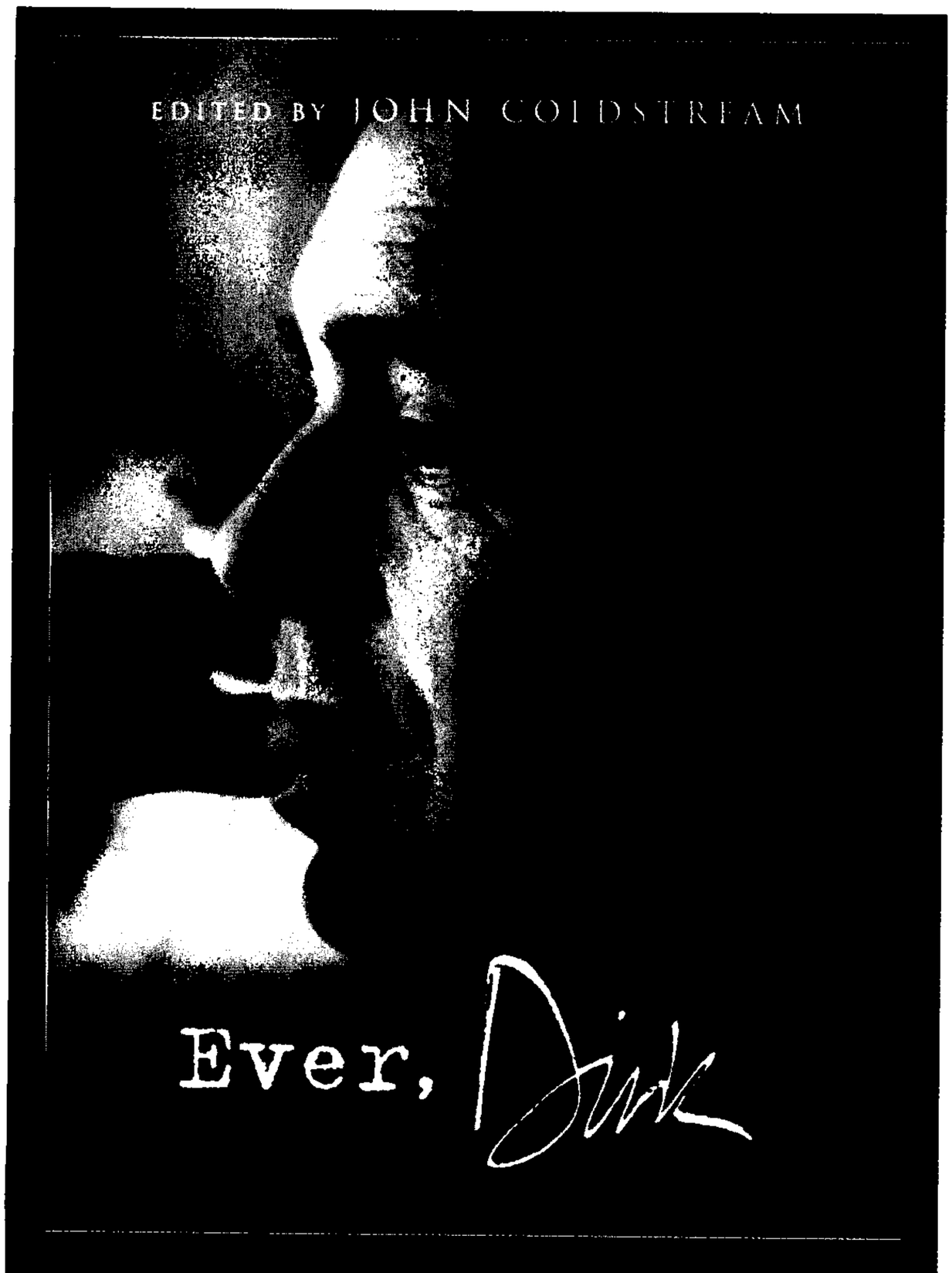
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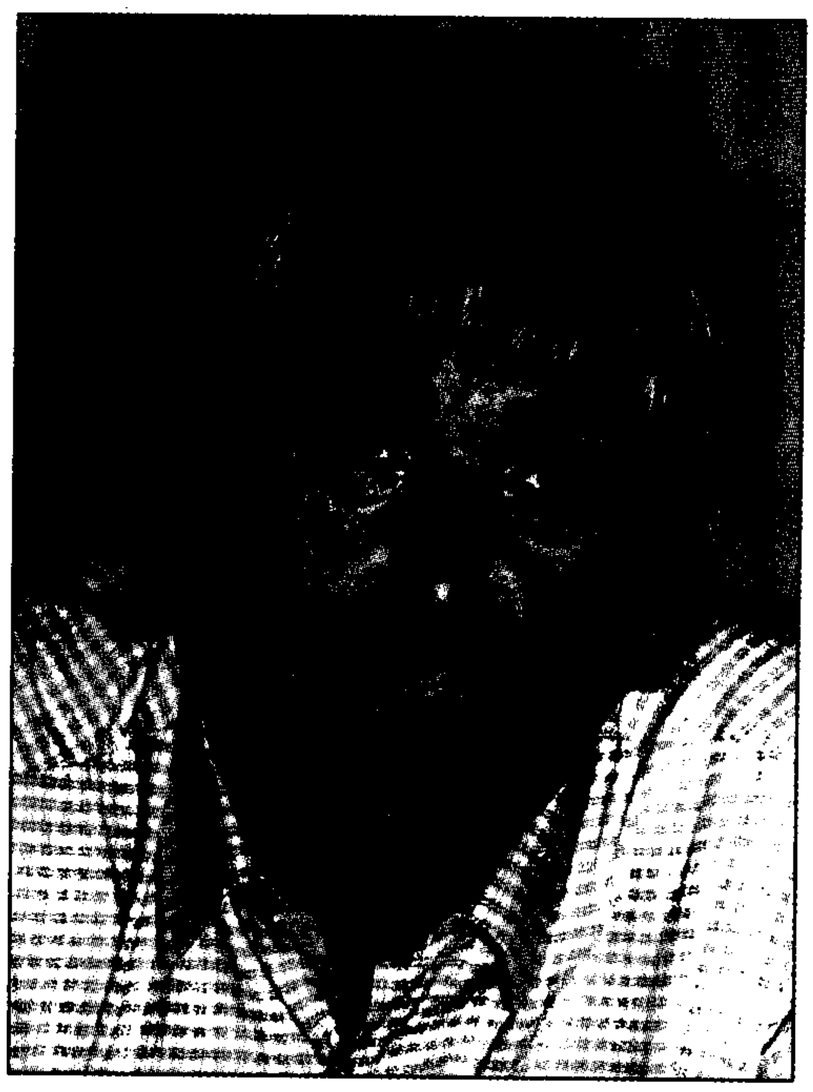

For the fourth year running *Private Eye* and *The Guardian* are awarding a prize for investigative/campaigning journalism in memory of Paul Foot.

The overall winner will be awarded £5,000, with the 5 runners-up each receiving £1,000 at a ceremony to be held in London on 3rd November 2008.

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OM SAI RAM

A fitting end to the ill-fitting British suit

A suitable man to spark a men's clothing revolution

Consider this proposition. Would you rather pay the same sum for a single, off-the-peg, chain store suit cut by a computer and sold to you by a spotty boy who thinks side vents are to be found on a Lambretta scooter, or for two bespoke, custom cut, hand-stitched suits, measured and sold to you by a man for whom suits are a lifetime's passion?

The British clothing chain store has a lot to fear from ***Mr. Raja M Daswani*** of Kowloon. If there were a global ambassador for men's suiting, Mr Daswani, who owns and runs Hong Kong's biggest tailoring business, would be that man. He and his family team measure and make huncreds of suits a week for discerning clients across the world.

Indeed, so successful is ***Mr. Daswani***, that - a little unnervingly as he is measuring you up - he freely admits he doesn't really need to work any more. 'My team is as experienced as I am. But I just love men's suits and I wouldn't feel right sitting at home. It's not a business. It's a mission.

'I love seeing customers walk in a really bad suit that cost them a fortune and walk out in one of our suits that's perfect in every way, made with a good heart in a superior fabric for a half or a quarter as much.'

The price of a Daswani shirt and suit are astonishing. We are talking from £19 (£25 including tax and duty) for a custom shirt and £129 (£169 including tax and duty) for a fully lined, made-to measure suit in a lightweight wool or linen, to £250 (£325 including tax and duty) for a 100 per cent wool, entirely hand finished suit in a British cloth, with every refinement from handmade button holes to knee lining. Even the most expensive suit, made in deluxe superfine wool for £1,500 (£1,950 including tax and duty), costs a third less than it would on **Savile Row**.

Raja Daswani may be based in Hong Kong, but his sartorial mission to the badly dressed and overpaying British customer brings him to the UK as often as once a month. He and his team take over hotel suites in major cities, so British customers can make an appointment and get the full Kowloon Monty.

Measurements and digital photos are taken here and emailed to Hong Kong. Often, your suit will be started on by a tailor 6,000 miles away before you've even left the hotel. You can have it couriered within a week or so, or wait for a second fitting when the Raja team hits your town again a few weeks later.

It now remains to see whether the Raja revolution, with its inspired mix of artistic flair, entrepreneurial genius and digital technology, will see the end of the off-the-peg British chain store suit. On price alone, it's a sartorial solution that will even please the Suits in accounts.

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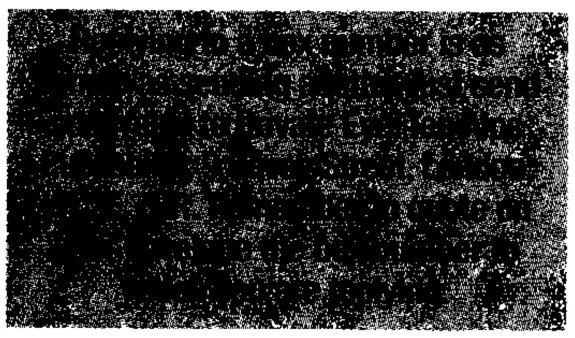

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GOOD BLOKE NEEDS SUPPORT – £15,000 needed – NatWest, S/C: 60-16-07. A/C: 75015439. Thanks.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES DEPLETED due to previous health problems, need help to get back on track. All help greatly appreciated. Lloyds TSB, S/C: 30-90-66. A/C: 07032482.

GORGEOUS GIRLS TRAVELLING: van robbed, stuck in London. Help! Happily email photos: aussi_em@hotmail.com S/C: 30-96-52. Lloyds: A/C: 12942360.

HAS ANYONE OUT THERE got too many troubles with having too much money! Send me your money and lessen your troubles. Try it. S/C: 20-84-17. A/C: 60139017.

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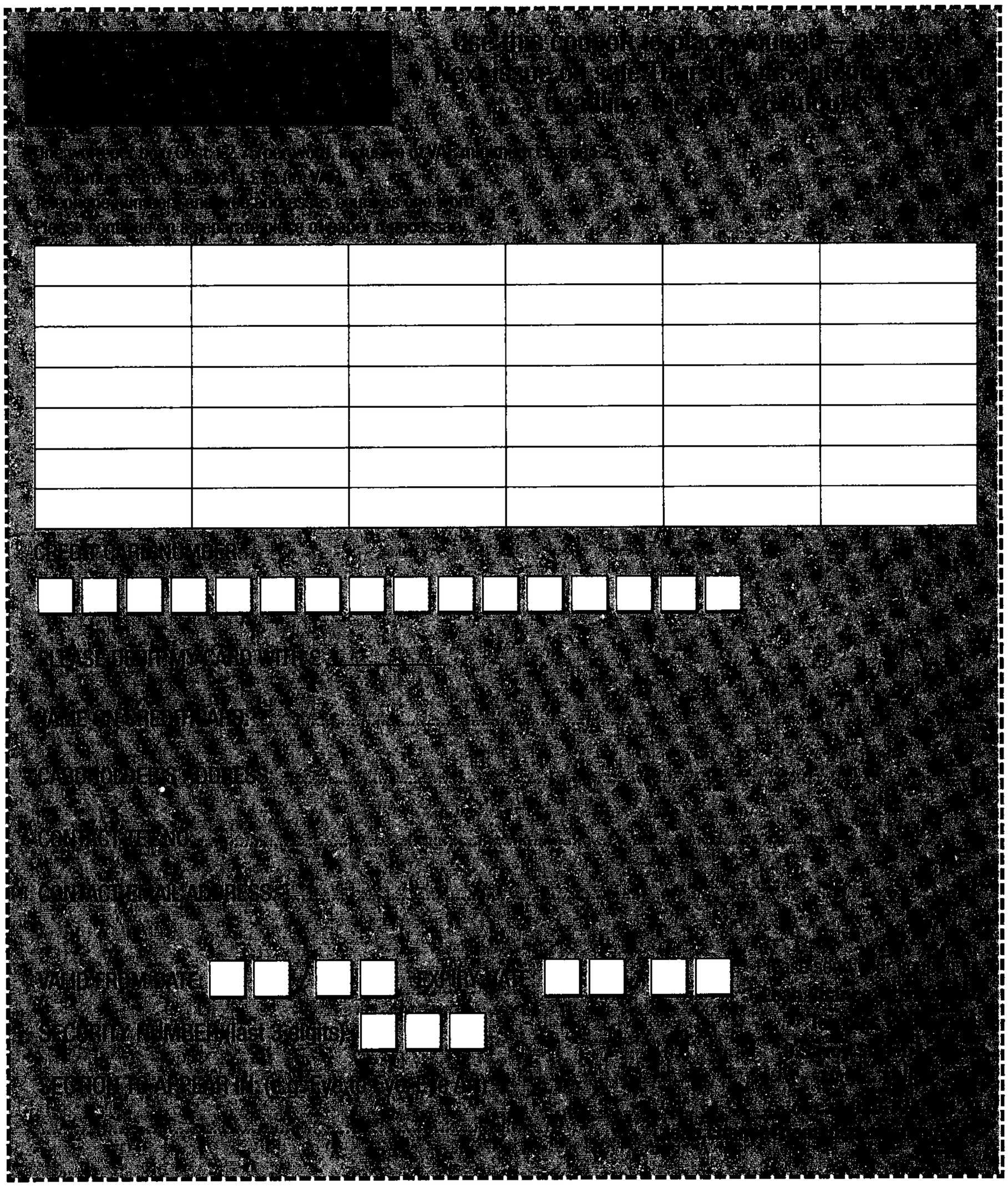

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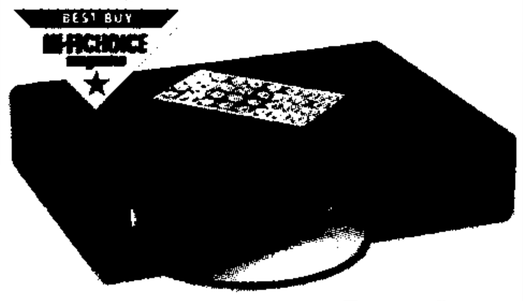

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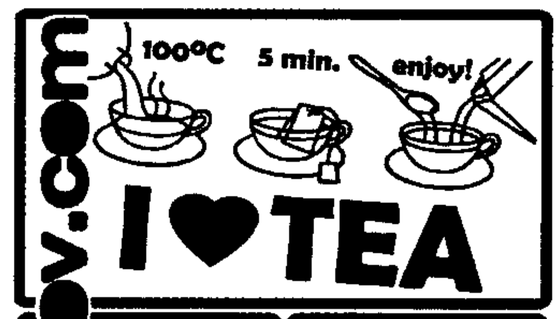

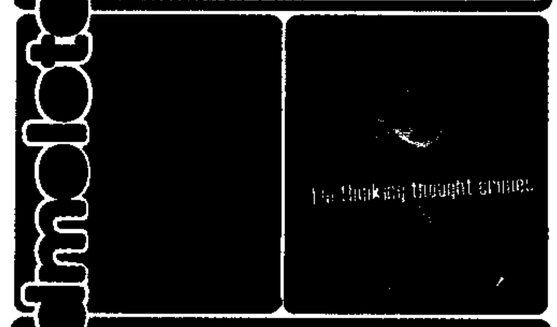

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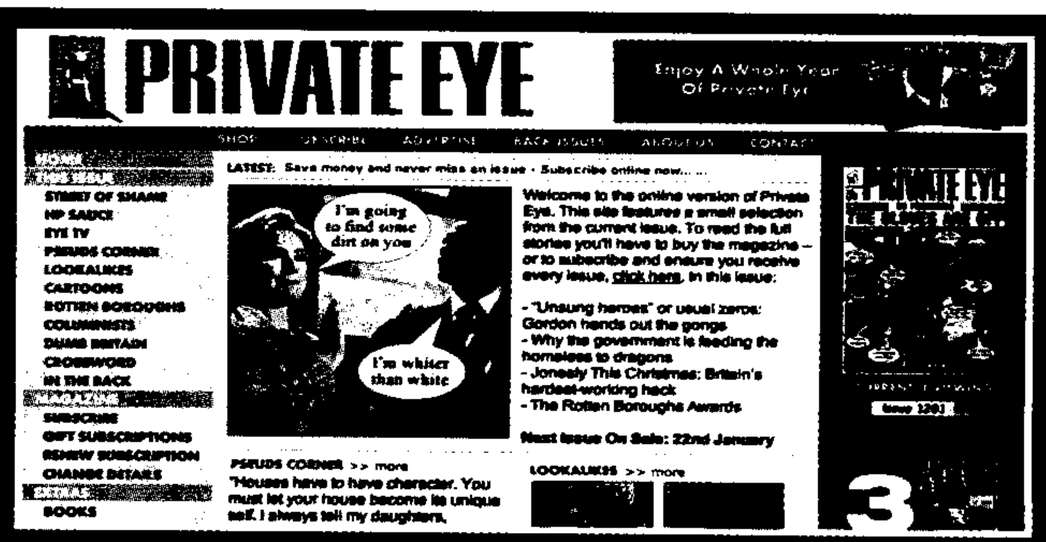
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Barbara says: "It never felt right, as it did with Ralph". Barbara says that each day she says "hello" to her sweetheart's picture of Ralph smiling shyly in the African bush. The picture is more or less all she has in the world. After a lifetime of prudence, the raging level of 7M% inflation has driven her into penury. She was too proud to turn to "charity". It took a lot of persuasion to convince her that it was a privilege for us to be able to help her. Now, albeit reluctantly, she accepts that.

Please act today!

- The inflation blight has rendered all savings worthless: prices double each day. ZANE staff are working flat out supplying food and medicines to people like Barbara.
- People like Barbara's Ralph gave selflessly to the free World from 1939-45. Now, in extreme old age, there are many who have nowhere to turn other than our excellent ZANE staff and the kindness of donors. ZANE has discovered that many, like Barbara, have no living relatives.
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Private Eye August 2008

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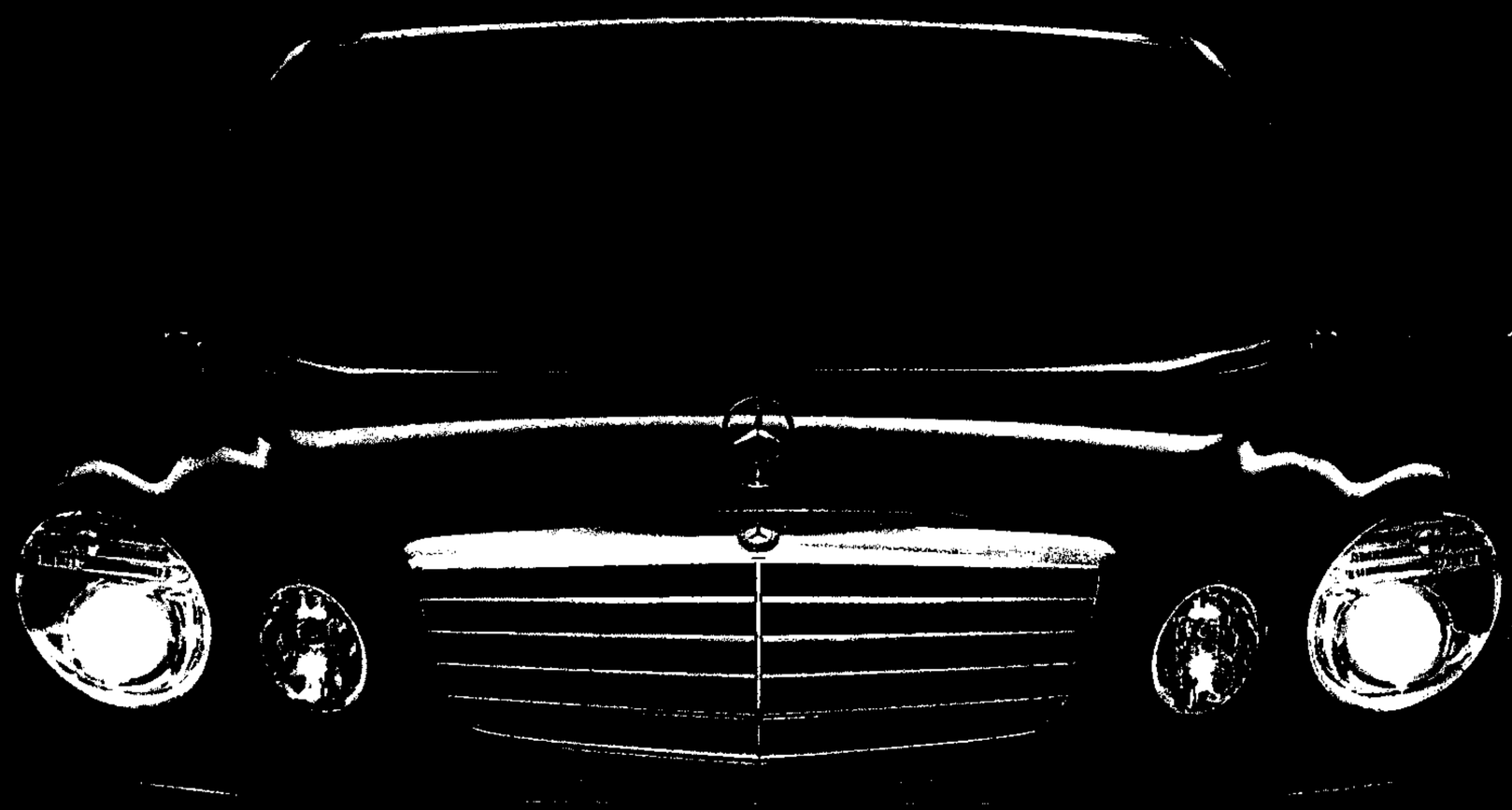

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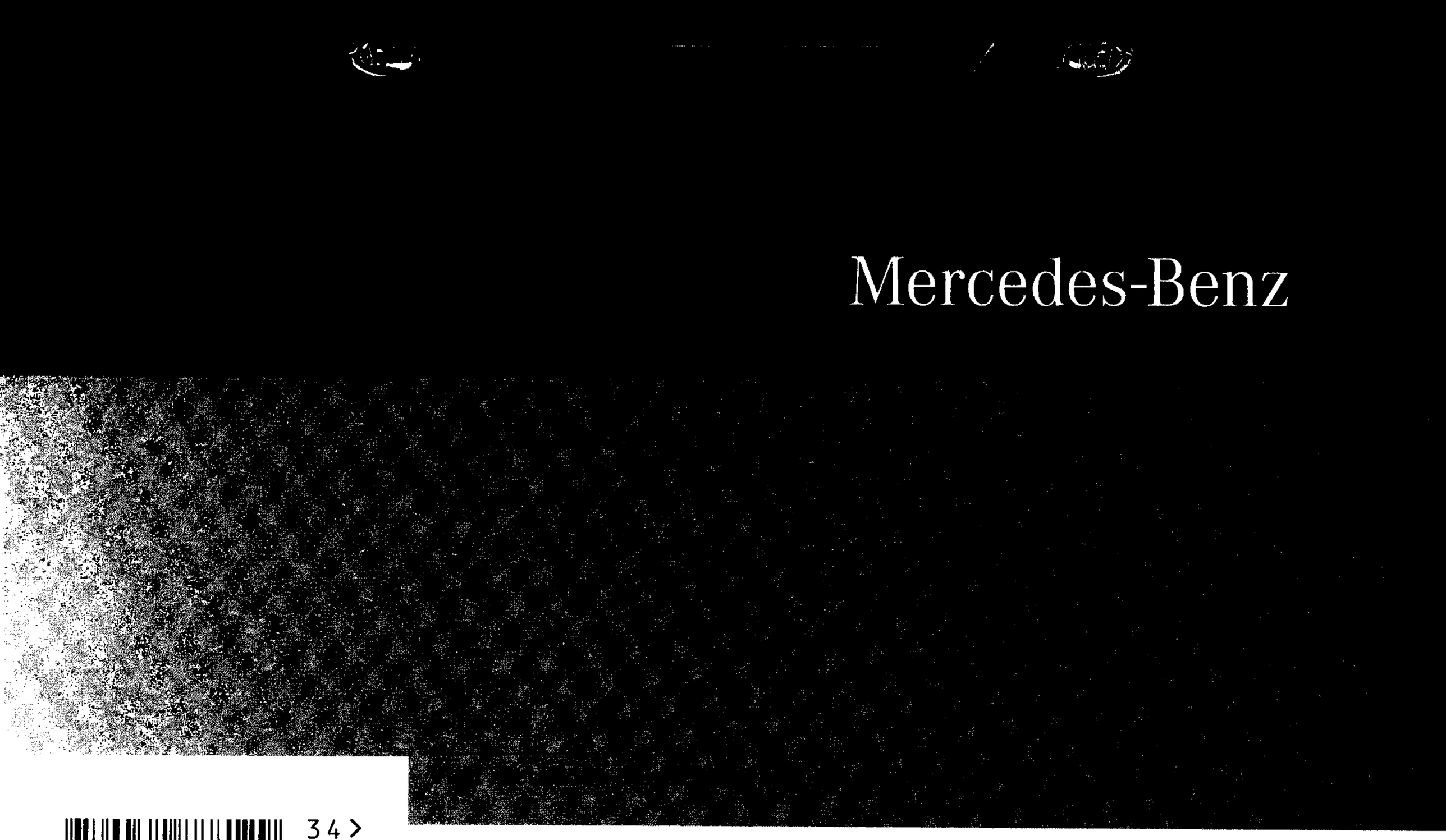

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